# Taylor Swift

Film & Music G2

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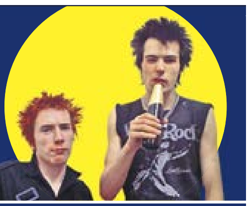


# The Guardian

Newspaper of the year

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# Escape of terror suspect prompts prison cuts row

Ministers are blamed for staff shortages in jails on second day of manhunt

**Haroon Siddique**
**Dan Sabbagh**
**Aletha Adu**

The escape of a former soldier from a London prison provoked a furious row yesterday as ministers were condemned over cuts and staff shortages that have left potentially dangerous inmates in low-security prisons.

With the hunt for Daniel Khalife, 21, involving 150 counter-terrorism officers, the police were urgently trying to establish whether he had help fleeing from HMP Wandsworth. They said Khalife - who faces espionage and terror charges - had strapped himself to the bottom of a lorry, raising questions about the equipment he used, and how he was not detected as the vehicle left the prison.

The chief inspector of prisons, the chair of parliament's justice committee and the Prison Officers Association (POA) all said HMP Wandsworth was known to have staffing issues, adding to pressure on the government over the escape on Wednesday morning, which Labour said "beggars belief".

Khalife's presence in a category B prison when accused of such serious offences also prompted concerns that other high-risk inmates may be held in security conditions not commensurate with their alleged crimes.

He is accused of planting fake bombs and collecting information that could be useful to an enemy country, in breach of the Official Secrets Act. The country is understood to be Iran, though it is unclear how strong the link is alleged to be.

The head of the Met's counter-terrorism command, Dominic Murphy, said: "If there are people out there in London today, or anywhere else in the UK, who are supporting Daniel and have supported his escape and are continuing to support him to prevent his capture and return to prison, those individuals commit serious criminal offences."

While the hunt involving the counter-terrorism police plus officers from the Met and other forces remained largely focused on London, the government faced questions about the state of prisons and the criminal justice system more widely.

Charlie Taylor, the chief inspector of prisons, said

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Swimmers attempting to cool down at Parliament Hill Lido in north London yesterday, which the Met Office provisionally said was the hottest day of the year, with a high of 32.6C in Surrey. **News** *Page 7* →

# Five million vapes being binned each week in UK

**Sarah Marsh**
*Consumer affairs correspondent*

Five million single-use vapes are thrown away in the UK every week, a fourfold increase on 2022, researchers have found, prompting new calls for a ban. Councils and paediatricians are among those demanding action on vapes because of health and environmental concerns.

Scott Butler, the executive director of Material Focus, the non-profit organisation that conducted the research, said the "problem with single-use vapes has got further out of control" since it published research last year. "Single-use vapes are a strong contender for being the most environmentally wasteful, damaging and dangerous consumer product ever made," he said.

Discarded vapes pose a threat to public safety because their lithium batteries can become flammable when crushed. The potential cost of collecting and recycling them is £200m, according to Material Focus, which it says should be paid for by producers, importers and retailers.

Sales of disposable vapes have soared to more than 360m annually, with the number of young women vaping every day more than tripling in a year, government figures show. Paediatricians say it is "fast becoming an epidemic among children", and want the government to ban disposable vapes.

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# One year into his reign, is he King Charles the cautious?

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**News**

*Rishi Sunak admires the build of an electric racing car with students at the University of Warwick*
PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS

# EU diplomats hope Horizon deal is first of many with UK

**Lisa O'Carroll**
*Brussels correspondent*

A dramatic thaw in relations with the EU has raised hopes that the UK's return to the multibillion pound Horizon research programme could be the first of many breakthroughs, diplomats in Brussels have said.

Under the deal announced yesterday, the UK starts paying into the fund in 2024 but in a concession from the EU, scientists will be able to apply immediately for funding in order to "accelerate" the level of participation of UK science to Horizon Europe.

EU diplomats claimed the British PM, Rishi Sunak, and the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, have a close relationship, in contrast to the hostility EU officials faced from Boris Johnson and Liz Truss. One Whitehall source said that the deal "would never have happened under Boris Johnson".

The UK's return to the Horizon programme after a three-year lockout has raised hope of a series of new deals including the suspension of planned tariffs on electric cars and better cooperation on migration.

Diplomats said Sunak's confirmation yesterday that the UK was immediately returning to the programme was a sign of good relations between Sunak and the European Commission president.

He described it as the "right deal" for the UK with officials saying Downing Street was mindful that this month was, in practice, a cut off point for scientists to start the sometimes lengthy journey to apply for rounds of funding for 2024. An "underperformance clause" will guarantee compensation if the UK gets 16% less than the £2bn a year it will invest in the programme. In the past the UK has matched France or Germany.

Sunak and Von der Leyen will both attend the the G20 summit in India this weekend. And they will be considering their alignment on their wider interests especially as Von der Leyen and the EU are pursuing multiple policies designed to reduce the dependence on Chinese supply chains. "The prime minister and the president talk about strategic interests around China every time they meet," said one source.

It is understood that relations between Sunak and Von der Leyen have blossomed since he took over from Liz Truss in Downing Street and they now talk to each other and text each other frequently without the need for official bilaterals.

Tariffs on UK car exports to the EU and on EU motor exports to the UK are due to begin in January but industry leaders on both sides of the channel have argued they are only being imposed because the industry cannot wean itself off Chinese components quickly enough.

Under the rules cars made on both sides of the channel manufacturers have to demonstrate that their products are 45% produced in either the UK or EU. The UK and the EU car industries have said the tariff will be a major blow to European car industry brands including BMW, Volkswagen, Peugeot and Fiat, which believe they need about three years to build a homegrown electric battery industry.

Concerns that a suspension of the tariff could be seen as a protectionist move by Brussels are never far from the narrative in Brussels but industry leaders believe Von der Leyen and key European leaders hold the key to a deal.

Insiders said the Horizon deal was not a sign that the UK would be returning to the EU through the window having left through the front door. "This is about building a very good trade and cooperation agreement, rather than the really scratchy one we had," one source said.

## Big research
### And a share of £85bn

**What is Horizon Europe?**
**With a budget of £85bn, it is the world's largest transnational research programme. It is open to EU members and countries that associate to the programme, as the UK has now done after leaving it due to Brexit. The funding supports collaborations on issues from cancer to the climate and robotics.**

**What does association mean?**
**UK researchers can again apply for grants. Because the current cycle of funding runs until 2027 and will be replaced by a seven-year funding cycle and another seven-year cycle after that, it provides scientists with long-term support.**

**Can the UK make up lost ground?**
**UK researchers were among the greatest beneficiaries of previous programmes. London and Brussels have expressed confidence that with a "turbo boost" in promotion of Horizon Europe, the UK can claw back its previous leading position in the scheme.**
**Ian Sample and Lisa O'Carroll**

# One in seven schools at risk from Raac were denied funding

**Peter Walker**
**Sally Weale**

More than one in seven English schools affected by dilapidated concrete were denied government funding to be rebuilt despite being deemed in emergency need, Guardian analysis of official data has shown.

It has already emerged that more than half of the English schools which applied to the Department for Education's schools rebuilding programme as an "exceptional case", meaning they are so run down that some buildings are at risk of imminent closure, were denied money. Of these schools, 22 feature on the DfE's list of schools deemed in danger because they were built using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (Raac), a lighter, cheaper variant with a limited lifespan. That is 15% of the 147 schools affected.

Among the 22 is Scalby school, a secondary academy in Scarborough, where one part of the estate dates from 1942. It applied to the DfE's rolling 10-year building programme as an exceptional case but was refused.

Michael McCluskie, the director of learning at the Coast and Vale Learning Trust, which runs Scalby, said it had been turned down in part because it could not contribute enough of its own money to the project after having been asked to take two failing schools into the chain.

Much of the rest of the school dates from the late 60s, the peak period for Raac. This was already known about, and mitigated in some places using roof supports. McCluskie said that before the new term the assumption had been that the school could open as normal, until the DfE alert.

Large parts of the school are now unusable, including the PE block, dining room and assembly hall. The start of term has been delayed until next week, with one year group sent to another school in the chain, and other years likely to be timetabled on to a "carousel" of part online and part in-person learning.

The school hopes to install 17 temporary classrooms and meeting rooms, but with a waiting time of up to 12 weeks, the disruption is likely to last until Christmas, McCluskie said.

▲ *Mayflower primary in Leicester has been affected by the Raac crisis*

The school, like others affected by Raac, has been allocated a DfE caseworker to help make interim arrangements.

Meanwhile, six unions representing heads, teachers and support staff have written a letter to the education secretary, Gillian Keegan, demanding an update on how many more schools may be affected by the Raac issue.

A DfE spokesperson said: "We consulted with responsible bodies on the criteria for the schools rebuilding programme and all nominations with exceptional need verified against that criteria were included. That means the schools with buildings in the worst condition are already being addressed.

"The department has taken action to select 400 schools with the greatest need, with 100 more yet to be confirmed. Where there is a significant issue with a building that cannot be managed within local resources, we provide additional support on a case-by-case basis."

# A blue plaque for Arthur Wharton, the best all-round athlete you've never heard of

**Mark Brown**
*North of England correspondent*

▶ *Arthur Wharton, England's first full-time black professional footballer, also excelled as a runner and cricketer* PHOTOGRAPH: BOB THOMAS/POPPERFOTO/ GETTY IMAGES

Arthur Wharton is far from being a household name, but his fans say his name should be shouted from the rafters. More than a century ago he was the outstanding sportsman of his generation: a world record-breaking runner; a superb cricketer; and England's first black professional footballer.

"He was a trailblazer, an inspiration," said the former Chelsea player Ken Monkou. "We follow in his footsteps … there wouldn't be a Usain Bolt; there wouldn't be me, John Barnes and Brendon Batson. He laid the foundation. He put the crumbs out."

Wharton was celebrated yesterday by the South Yorkshire town of Rotherham, whose football team he joined as a professional in 1889.

A plaque organised by Rotherham Civic Society celebrating his life and career was unveiled by Wharton supporters including Monkou and another former Chelsea player, David Speedie.

It was unveiled at Rotherham Titans rugby club, 134 years to the day that Wharton played his first game there at the then home of Rotherham Town.

Shaun Campbell, of the Arthur Wharton foundation, said his story should be more widely known and welcomed the plaque. "You've got the greatest all-round sportsman the world has ever seen and he was here in Rotherham. Don't let him slip through your fingers."

Monkou said Wharton's achievements were just ridiculous. "Forget about his race, what he achieved as a person, as a professional footballer, athlete, cricket player … you could not make it up."

The hope is that the plaque will help inspire new interest in Wharton and his story. And what a story. Wharton, the son of missionaries, was born in Ghana in 1866. He arrived in Darlington to study at a Wesleyan college as a teenager in 1883, probably with the intention of following in his parents' footsteps.

He was a tremendous athlete and soon discovered running was more lucrative than studying.

The young, insanely fast Wharton won several competitions in the north of England and the Midlands before entering the national championships at Stamford Bridge in London. It was here that Wharton became the first runner in the world to run 100 yards in 10 seconds flat at a championship.

Further wins came and Wharton was becoming a star, which made him famous and envied. At one meeting he overheard athletes using racist language to which he reputedly said: "I'll give you to understand I can box as well as run." They quickly shut up.

Two years later he turned professional and moved to Sheffield, the centre of professional running and gambling.

The Nottingham Football News in 1892 referred to Wharton as having a "meteor-like" career in running. One of his races in 1889 was for prize money equating to £16,000 today.

There was a problem, however, in that professional running was handicapped and Wharton was an inevitable back-starter. This led him to turn to another of his skills, becoming England's first full-time black professional footballer in 1889 when he signed for Rotherham as a forward, scoring, according to one account, a hat-trick in his first game. After an injury to another player he took over as goalkeeper in a famous match against Preston North End, arguably the best team of the day.

Wharton needed to supplement his football income and ran two pubs in the town.

Peter Feek, of Rotherham Civic Society, said he was enormously popular in the area and played cricket for a number of teams. The South Yorkshire Times said of him: "When he is in the humour he hits hard, high and often."

After sport Wharton went down the mines, taking a job at Edlington pit. He died in poverty in 1930 and was buried in an unmarked grave until the Darlington-based Arthur Wharton Foundation provided a headstone in 1997.

Today, his grave is regularly tended by Speedie, who also played for Darlington and worked as a miner. He only heard about Wharton three years ago and was blown away by his story.

"I remember the first time I went to his grave, it was an emotional experience. If you think about it, at the time he was just a normal guy but what a player. If he had been playing today he'd be being paid a fortune and worth £100m."

▲ *The unveiling yesterday of the blue plaque to celebrate the life and sporting achievements of Arthur Wharton* PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN

# Police called to report of mass killing arrive to find yoga class

**Sammy Gecsoyler**

A yoga class on the Lincolnshire coast became the centre of a police incident after a member of the public who had seen people lying on the floor called the police to report a "mass killing".

Participants in the class, held at the Seascape cafe, inside the North Sea observatory in Chapel St Leonards were in the middle of meditation when yoga teacher Millie Laws saw a couple with some dogs come up to the window and have a look inside.

"They walked off really quickly and I didn't think anything of it," she said. However, in a Facebook post, the cafe said that someone had "reported a mass killing" after seeing people on the floor inside the building. They wrote: "If anyone heard the mass of police sirens in Chapel St Leonards at 9.30pm last night then please be reassured …

"They were on their way to the observatory after someone had reported a mass killing in our building, having seen several people laying on the floor … which actually turned out to be the yoga class in meditation.

The cafe regularly plays host to yoga classes in the evenings. The Facebook post added: "We are not part of any mad cult or crazy clubs."

Laws, who has only recently moved into the Chapel St Leonards area, said: "I didn't know until after we left that these people phoned in saying that there was a mass murderer, that they were wearing a robe and they were walking over all of the people, and it looked like some kind of ritual, and that the people on the floor were actually dead.

"I guess from the outside view it could look like that, because they're all really still, very nice and relaxed. I'm sure their imagination was running wild with what was going on."

Lincolnshire police confirmed to PA Media that the call had been made at 8.56pm by a member of the public "with good intentions".

A spokesperson said: "A call was made following concerns for the occupants of the North Sea observatory, at Chapel St Leonards.

"Officers attended, we're happy to report everyone was safe and well."

▲ *Millie Laws ran the yoga class that was mistaken for a crime scene*

▼ *An artwork created by Vincent Mcindoe in collaboration with the England team sponsor O2 is unveiled outside the Louvre in Paris yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: KIERAN CLEEVES/PA WIRE

# Host with the most

## Rugby World Cup to Olympics - France's golden year begins

**Sean Ingle**
*Paris*

When dusk falls over Paris tonight, the city will reverberate to the spectacular and the divine. To mark the start of the Rugby World Cup, the Eiffel Tower will blaze with light. Then the Oscar winner Jean Dujardin will direct an opening ceremony that celebrates French "*savoir-faire* and *art de vivre*", as well as the sport's 200th birthday.

Inevitably, there will be fireworks. But the biggest bang of all will come when the two favourites for the tournament, France and New Zealand, lock muscle and bone in the opening game, and 80,000 people at the Stade de France roar their approval.

Organisers hope it will set the mood for a competition that stretches over 48 matches and 51 days - and is more than three weeks longer than the Fifa World Cup in Qatar. The initial signs are positive. Teams have been welcomed to their training bases by huge crowds. Images of the French captain, Antoine Dupont, are everywhere. And 2.5m tickets have been sold, the most ever, with 600,000 visitors arriving from abroad. Among them are the Prince and Princess of Wales, who will be in Bordeaux and Marseille to cheer on Wales and England this weekend.

Make no mistake, this is one of the biggest sporting events of 2023. Yet in the highest circles of the French government and sport, it is being viewed with bifocal lenses. For this tournament also sounds the starting gun for a year-long saturnalia of sport in France that concludes with Paris hosting the Olympics and Paralympics.

As yesterday's bullish headline in Le Parisien put it: "From the Rugby World Cup to the Paris Games, here we go for the sporting year of the century." However, its editorial was more circumspect, warning of a "crazy" 12 months in which "the programme promises to be rich, the emotions immense, and the organisation Dantesque".

However, Étienne Thobois, who was CEO of the 2007 Rugby World Cup in France and is now in charge of the Paris 2024 Olympics, is confident both events will be enormous successes - and have a deep and lingering impact across French society.

"We were traditionally a country that was very attached to culture, and maybe less so with sport," he said. "But now we love big events. One of the aims we have is to make sport a bigger part of society. We believe it is a fantastic tool for education, health and inclusion. And hosting sports events keeps the fire alive because these incredible athletes and their stories bring people and kids to sports. And that's a fantastic thing."

Speaking from the Paris 2024 offices in St Denis, Thobois says there have been shared discussions with Rugby World Cup organisers over potential issues but plays down suggestions the tournament will be a dry run for the Games. "We are quite close," he says. "But the Rugby World Cup is a fantastic event in itself. However, there will definitely be things to learn - especially in flow management, security, and transport.

"It's different, of course. But what happens during the Rugby World Cup will have an influence on what people project for next year's Olympics so we'll be watching carefully."

> ***'France was traditionally very attached to culture, and maybe less so with sport. But now we love big events'***
>
> **Étienne Thobois**
> *Paris 2024 chief*

And so will the rest of the world. The first major test will come during the opening game, when a beefed-up security presence at the Stade de France is designed to stop a repeat of incidents at last year's Champions League final, which included Liverpool fans being mugged and assaulted after the game. With the stadium also hosting the athletics at the Olympics, there is a sense that France's match against New Zealand desperately needs to go off without a hitch.

As for the tournament itself, there is a growing confidence in France the hosts can win their first Rugby World Cup, despite injuries to some key players. But they have not been helped by a grotesquely lopsided draw that ensures only two of the world's top five teams - Ireland, France, New Zealand, South Africa and Scotland - can reach the semi-finals.

For England, however, injustice creates opportunity. Despite a poor year, which has included a surprise defeat to Fiji, bookmakers still make them strong favourites to emerge from a group that includes Argentina, Samoa, Chile and Japan, and then reach the semi-finals.

However the game's romantics will hope there is also more scope for the smaller nations, in particular Fiji and Samoa, to thrive and survive into the last eight.

No wonder World Rugby's chairman, Sir Bill Beaumont, promises a tournament that will be "compelling, spectacular and unpredictable" and proclaims that "never has a nation been so ready and so excited to host".

**Continued** *from page 1*

## Five million vapes thrown away in UK every week

Butler said: "Very few producers and retailers comply with environmental regulations and put recycling points and systems in place.

"This all means that too often local authorities are being burdened with the major operational and financial headaches associated with what is now the fastest growing and most dangerous waste stream in the UK, single-use vapes."

Other countries are taking action. In France, the prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, said on Sunday that the government would present a plan to ban disposable vapes, and Germany has outlawed flavoured vapes. Humza Yousaf, the Scottish first minister, has announced a consultation on banning disposable vapes in 2024, and a similar consultation is taking place in Ireland.

Material Focus surveyed 5,156 UK adults and 167 teenagers aged 16 and 17 between June and August. It wanted to identify how many single-use vapes were being bought in the UK and how they were disposed of.

The research also explored the preferred recycling solutions. About 75% of vapers think producers and retailers should provide more information stating that vapes can be recycled.

Butler said visible vape recycling drop-off points should be introduced, alongside "proper financing of genuine recycling solutions". He said there needed to be "immediate, significant and transparent vape industry voluntary action" and called for the word "disposable" to be dropped from marketing of the products.

"Until single-use vape producers, importers and retailers act to genuinely comply with and finance their legal environmental responsibilities then the calls for banning the sale of them will only strengthen," he added.

Only 17% of people say they recycle single-use vapes, with 73% throwing them away and 1% flushing them down the toilet. Material Focus wants more information displayed on vapes on recycling, and more recycling points in stores, parks, public places and schools and colleges. More than half of survey respondents said they would be more likely to recycle single-use vapes if there were recycling points in store. Material Focus has created a postcode locator of 13,000 recycling points.

A spokesperson for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "The government is very concerned about the environmental impacts of disposable vapes and will shortly publish a response to its call for evidence on vaping which closed in June. All electrical waste should be properly disposed of and recycled to protect our environment - this includes disposable vape pens.

"Our environmental improvement plan sets out our plan to review rules for waste electricals this year. As part of this, we will consider what changes in legislation are needed to ensure the vaping sector foots the bill for the collection and treatment of their used products."

**Feeling ruff**
**Vet bills prompt UK watchdog review**
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**Slow and steady**
**Wales prepares for rollout of 20mph limit**
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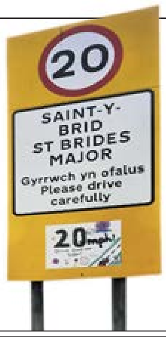




# National

## Police to investigate maternity care failings at hospitals trust

**Jessica Murray**
**Matthew Weaver**

Nottinghamshire police have announced they are launching a criminal investigation into maternity failings at Nottingham university hospitals (NUH) NHS trust, after hundreds of families raised concerns to an independent review.

In January the trust was fined a record £800,000 after admitting to failings in the care of a woman and her baby, who died minutes after being born.

In a statement released yesterday, the chief constable of Nottinghamshire police, Kate Meynell, said officers were preparing a criminal investigation and were planning to meet affected families soon.

The update followed a meeting with Donna Ockenden, the midwifery expert who is leading an independent review into maternity services at the trust after there were "significant concerns raised regarding the quality and safety of maternity services".

Meynell said: "We want to work alongside the review but also ensure that we do not hinder its progress. However, I am in a position to say we are preparing to launch a police investigation. We plan to hold preliminary discussions with some local families in the near future."

She added that Anthony May OBE, the chief executive of NUH, who came into the post last September, "has committed to fully cooperate with this police investigation".

A statement issued on behalf of some of the affected parents said: "We welcome the long-awaited news of this police investigation and we are very grateful to the chief constable, Kate Meynell, for her decision.

"There will be a wealth of information from victim families for her team to use. A large number of us have alleged crimes and we will be sharing our evidence with the police to assist them with their investigations.

▲ *Police chief Kate Meynell said a criminal inquiry was being prepared*

"There has been poor maternity care as well as poor investigation of that care at Nottingham university hospitals trust over many years."

The Ockenden-led review, which began a year ago, is already working with more than 700 families who came forward with concerns about the treatment they received, and this number is expected to rise to 1,800.

The review team is planning to implement an opt-out approach, meaning about 1,000 families will be contacted to ask if they want to be involved in their investigation, and it will become the largest ever review of its kind carried out in the UK.

Last week a number of families called for police to investigate, including Sarah and Jack Hawkins, whose daughter, Harriet, was stillborn in Nottingham city hospital.

Speaking to ITV News Central, Sarah Hawkins said: "The clinicians who failed us, the managers who failed us, have not been held to account. They're fully working, and in any other walk of life, if hundreds of babies were being killed and mothers being harmed, action would be taken."

Ockenden also led the review into maternity services at Shrewsbury and Telford hospital NHS trust, which became the biggest maternity scandal in NHS history after the review concluded that 300 babies had died or been left brain-damaged owing to inadequate care.

Meynell said Nottinghamshire police were studying the work being done by West Mercia police to investigate the Shrewsbury and Telford scandal to guide their investigation.

In a statement, May said: "I have expressed my commitment to the independent review. I have given the same commitment to the chief constable in respect of any police investigation."

**Nurturing a new life** Sarikei, a Bornean orangutan at Chester zoo, cradles her newborn, which arrived during the early hours of 31 August, following an eight-and-a-half-month pregnancy. The IUCN lists this rare orangutan species as critically endangered, meaning the primates are at an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. The zoo also has captive Sumatran orangutans.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHESTER ZOO/SWNS

## Pincher to quit as MP after losing appeal against suspension

**Aubrey Allegretti**
**Jessica Murray**

The former Conservative MP Chris Pincher said yesterday he would quit the House of Commons, triggering a byelection in what was previously considered the safe seat of Tamworth in Staffordshire.

Days after he lost an appeal against an eight-week suspension from parliament for groping two men at a private members' club last summer, the former deputy chief whip said he wanted to put an end to his constituents' uncertainty.

Pincher said he had "made arrangements to resign and leave the Commons". He added: "Tamworth is a wonderful place and it has been an honour to represent its people."

The move fires the starting gun on a long-expected third byelection likely to take place this autumn.

Rishi Sunak is already facing the headache of trying to defend the seat of Mid Bedfordshire, which was recently vacated by the former Tory MP Nadine Dorries, who had a 24,000 majority. Meanwhile the SNP is fighting to retain the Rutherglen and Hamilton West constituency in Scotland, formerly represented by Margaret Ferrier.

Pincher was nearly 20,000 votes out in front in Tamworth at the last general election. However, bigger majorities have been overturned in recent byelections and nationally, the Conservatives remain 20 points behind Labour in the opinion polls.

A further problem for Conservative campaign headquarters is posed by their choice of candidate for the upcoming Tamworth byelection.

Eddie Hughes, the Conservative MP for Walsall North, which is in effect being abolished under proposed boundary changes, had been selected as the party's Tamworth candidate at the next general election but has confirmed he will not be standing in the byelection.

"I have a commitment to my constituents until the next general election," he said.

Hughes said his focus was squarely on supporting the Conservative candidate at the next byelection and he was already out in Tamworth delivering leaflets. "Once we win, we'll figure out what happens to me," he said.

While no date has yet been set by the Conservatives for the byelection, it is likely to be held on 19 October – the same day as Mid Bedfordshire, where bookmakers have Labour as the favourite.

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# Woking council plans ‘dreadful’ cuts to plug £1.2bn deficit from risky investment under Tories

**Richard Partington**
*Economics correspondent*

Woking council has laid out a drastic package of cuts to local services after it in effect declared itself bankrupt this summer, revealing a £1.2bn deficit racked up from a risky investment spree overseen by its former Conservative administration.

Plans include scrapping funding for dozens of the town’s sports pavilions and toilets, the closure of a swimming pool, cutting resources for parks, the arts, and ending council backing for some community centres, annual concerts, and involvement in youth sporting events.

The troubled Surrey local authority also proposed scrapping millions of pounds in support for playgrounds and community care schemes for young, old and vulnerable residents in an attempt to balance the books. It will launch a consultation on the proposals next month.

In a document setting out an austerity programme, it also revealed plans to remove funding for choir and dance classes for residents with Parkinson’s disease, as well as grants for community transport for elderly and disabled people, and for a charity helping domestic abuse survivors.

John Bond, a former independent councillor in Woking, said: “I think residents were unaware really quite how bad it would be. Who will want to come and live in Woking now?

“It’s going to affect everything, with the vulnerable suffering most. There is so much money owing, it’s going to go on for 10 or 20 years. The amounts are mind-boggling.”

The council also said it could not afford to complete a 1,200-home development at the Sheerwater estate, a half-built regeneration scheme, and would seek “alternative options” to finish the project.

Council coordination and support for summer concerts, celebrations for Diwali and Chinese new year, and the town’s involvement in the Surrey Youth Games will also cease.

Woking issued a section 114 notice in June, signalling that it lacked the resources to balance its budget, but other local authorities in England are experiencing financial difficulties.

Birmingham city council, the largest local authority in the UK, became the latest to issue such a notice this week, blaming a £760m bill for equal pay claims, problems installing a new IT system and £1bn in government cuts over the past decade.

Rishi Sunak sought this week to capitalise on the Labour-run authority’s meltdown, telling the Commons: “They’ve bankrupted Birmingham, we can’t let them bankrupt Britain.”

However, councils from across the political divide are increasingly sounding the alarm after years of cuts to central government funding, soaring inflation, and rising demand amid the cost of living crisis.

Others to issue section 114 notices in the past few years include the Conservative-run and now defunct Northamptonshire council and Thurrock, alongside Labour-run Slough and Nottingham. At least 26 English local authorities are thought to be at risk of issuing a section 114 notice within the next two years.

▲ *The town council had invested heavily in property development*

Woking’s troubles stem from a programme of commercial investments and regeneration schemes overseen by its former Tory administration, after piling up debts of £1.8bn - more than 100 times its annual £16m of core funding from council tax, government grants and other income.

The council’s Liberal Democrat leadership has blamed the Tory party, which they ousted last year, for borrowing billions of pounds to fund risky schemes, including a complex of towers in the town centre - the tallest buildings outside a big city in England - with a four-star Hilton hotel, public plazas and shops.

Ann-Marie Barker, the council leader, said: “These are dreadful proposals we don’t want to put forward. However, it’s important to note that it is historic debt levels we’re dealing with, on an unprecedented scale.”

Acknowledging that residents will “rightly be unhappy”, Barker said the Conservatives were responsible. “We need to put our house in order to live within our means.”

# September record set to fall after UK sees hottest day of year

**Alexandra Topping**

The UK has provisionally recorded its hottest day of the year, with this week expected to be the longest prolonged period of hot weather ever seen in September, the Met Office said yesterday.

Temperatures reached 32.6C in Wisley, Surrey, yesterday. Amber heat-health alerts are in place for much of England, with only the north-east under a yellow alert.

The Met Office said while temperatures had reached similar levels in 2020 and 2021, hot weather this week could last until the end of the weekend. Yesterday was the third day of temperatures over 30C - which already matches the previous record for consecutive days of high heat in September.

Experts said the heatwave should be a wake-up call to international leaders to rapidly reduce carbon emissions, after analysis by Climate Central said that the current heatwave in the UK was made five times more likely by the climate crisis.

Forecasts indicate that temperatures in cities including London, Leicester, Leeds and Birmingham will be more than 10C higher than the 1991 to 2020 average for this week, the analysts said.

More than 61,000 people died in the European heatwaves of 2022, according to a recent study, including more than 3,000 in the UK.

▲ *A paddleboarder enjoys balmy conditions as he passes the remains of the West Pier in Brighton*
PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON DACK NEWS/ALAMY

Heatwave conditions were already met in areas of West Yorkshire, Cornwall, Devon and Wales on Tuesday, according to the Met Office, but the temperature did not surpass June’s highest temperature of 32.2C (90F).

Health warnings have been put out across the UK, and the NHS is expected to come under extra pressure as a result of the heat.

**32.6C**
*Temperature recorded in Wisley, Surrey, yesterday, beating 2023’s previous high of 32.2C in June*

More than half of councils this year had made preparations to stop road surfaces from melting by treating them with sand, said David Fothergill, chairman of the Local Government Association’s community wellbeing board.

“Some people are more at risk of harm from high temperatures and need to be more careful. These include older people, especially those over 75, people who live on their own, those with a pre-existing health condition, babies and young children and people who spend a lot of time outside,” he said.

Simon Partridge, a forecaster at the Met Office said current temperatures were not unusual in September, but said the hottest day of the year did not often happen this month.

“The fact that we are getting the hottest day of the year in September this year is more a reflection of how much cooler July and August were,” he said. “It does look like a fairly safe bet that by Sunday we will have had temperatures above 30C for six days.”

Temperatures were expected to begin to fall at the weekend, with a chance of thunderstorms on Sunday, said Partridge.

Asked why the Met Office had called yesterday’s hottest temperature “provisional”, he said that - as well as being standard practice - it was a sensible measure to take.

One year a provisional hottest temperature had been recorded, but CCTV footage later revealed that an ice-cream van had been parked by the weather enclosure, and it is believed heat from its exhaust pipe had tipped the temperature to the record level. “That’s why we always say provisional,” he said.

“There’s always the ice-cream van factor to bear in mind.”

# ‘Skin-like’ golden orb found off the Alaska coast could be an egg

**Hannah Devlin**
*Science correspondent*

A golden orb that may be an egg laid by an unknown sea creature has been discovered on the ocean floor off the Pacific coast of Alaska.

Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) in the US, which made the discovery, suggest the smooth object with a hole at the centre could be a hatched egg or a marine sponge.

Researchers are conducting tests and a DNA analysis to work out which family of marine life the shiny object - which feels like “skin tissue” according to Noaa - belongs to.

A remotely operated arm was deployed to “tickle” the egg. It was then gently “suctioned” up a tube for testing in a lab. The dive was part of the Seascape Alaska 5 expedition, which will continue until 15 September and can be followed on a live stream.

The mission is exploring the Gulf of Alaska, down to depths of four miles, including deep-sea coral and sponge habitats, and geological features such as mud volcanoes.

▲ *Scientists say the mystery golden orb could also be a marine sponge*

**National**
**Prisons**

# Ministers blamed for staff shortages in jails on second day of hunt for escaped suspect

**Continued** *from page 1*

"there are too many prisoners in Wandsworth for the amount of staff" and that such concerns had been flagged for years.

"This is very concerning because Wandsworth had a previous escape in 2019 as well," he told BBC Radio 4's World At One programme. "Obviously any prisoner getting out of the jail is extremely rare event. But particularly a prisoner who's accused of a terrorist offence makes it all worse.

"But to some extent, our concerns about Wandsworth over a number of years make it a jail that's more likely for this sort of thing to happen. Particularly the lack of staffing, which has dogged the prison. I think when we last inspected at the end of 2021. they were 30% short of staff."

His concerns echoed those of the POA, which said the prison was "overcrowded and under resourced" with chronic staffing shortages and inadequate training.

Steve Gillan, the POA general secretary, said: "You cannot take out £900m from the budget with reduced staffing levels up and down the country and expect the Prison Service to operate as if nothing has happened.

"Government needs to take responsibility for the decimation of the Prison Service with less staff and more prisoners, and Wandsworth is a typical example of what life is like for serving prison officers operating in a stressful and violent workplace with inadequate staff levels caring for over 1,600 prisoners at that establishment."

A significant intervention came from Sir Bob Neill, the Conservative MP who chairs the justice committee. He said problems with staffing at Wandsworth and more widely were "a matter of record", adding: "There is an issue across the prison service with retaining experienced staff - we have a large number of comparatively inexperienced staff."

The comments in the Commons came after the justice secretary, Alex Chalk, announced independent investigations into how Khalife had escaped, why he was being held in a lower-security prison and whether other high-risk inmates may need to be moved from the jail.

He said reviews would look into the placement and categorisation of all inmates at HMP Wandsworth and all those in detention who had been charged with terrorism offences.

Chalk added: "No stone must be left unturned in getting to the bottom of what happened. Who was on duty that morning? In what roles, ranging from the kitchen to the prison gate? What protocols were in place? Were they followed?"

Defence of the government's record on prisons came mainly from the prime minister's official spokesperson, who said Rishi Sunak still had confidence in Chalk.

He added: "We recognise the need for more staff and that's why we've increased the workforce by 4,000 since 2017. We're hiring 5,000 more across the estate in the coming years. We're also boosting pay by 7%, so the starting salaries have gone from £22,000 to £30,000. And we're retaining more staff. The resignation rate amongst junior prison officers is down around 2.5% compared to last year."

Murphy did not rule out Khalife having gone abroad but said that the alert to borders were sent out relatively quickly on Wednesday morning.

The Bidfood lorry to which he is believed to have strapped himself left HMP Wandsworth at 7.32am. Khalife was declared missing at 7.50am; police were informed at 8.15am and the van was stopped at 8.37am in Upper Richmond Road.

The London borough of Kingston and the county of Staffordshire, both places with which Khalife has connections, are also areas of focus.

Murphy reiterated that Khalife was believed to pose a low threat to the public. However, stressing the difficulty of the manhunt, he said the escapee had a skillset different from most people, having trained in one of the best militaries in the world.

By yesterday evening there had been more than 50 calls from the public but no confirmed sightings.

▲ *Daniel Khalife pictured in uniform during his army training*

## A risky breakout How did ex-soldier conceal himself under lorry to flee?

**Dan Sabbagh**

It was hardly the most sophisticated escape, and it should have been easy to prevent. At 7.32am a food delivery lorry turned right out of Wandsworth prison's gates, concluding what should have been an uneventful run.

Except this time, 21-year-old former soldier and terror and spy suspect Daniel Khalife had managed to strap himself under the vehicle, evading the beleaguered jail's security and becoming only the seventh prisoner to escape from prison in England and Wales in the past five years.

Khalife had secured himself a position working in the prison canteen, considered a plum role for somebody who could be trusted. But it was also a place where deliveries would routinely take place, bringing in food to the 1,500-plus inmates and staff at the south London jail first built in 1851.

Police were not called by the prison until 8.15am and the lorry not stopped until it had travelled about three miles in the morning rush hour to the nearby Upper Richmond Road, by which time Khalife had disappeared. Although not described as a danger to the public, Commander Dominic Murphy, the Met's counter terrorism commander, emphasised that the young man "has military training" and that "we have some of the best military training in the UK". That may have contributed to his willingness to stage a risky breakout attempt.

Khalife had been held at Wandsworth, a medium security category B jail, since the beginning of the year. He was facing trial on three charges related to espionage and terrorism, with a full hearing scheduled for Woolwich crown court in November.

Pictures released yesterday show a young slim, smiling soldier, who first trained in 2019 and joined the Royal Signals. But in January, everything changed. The first charge was that he had devised a fake bomb, made up, the Crown said in its initial prosecution, of "three canisters with wires" at his barracks in Stafford.

> *'There are too many prisoners in Wandsworth for the amount of staff'*
>
> **Charlie Taylor** *Chief inspector of prisons*

A second charge was that, whilst serving, Khalife had, in August 2021, elicited personnel information from an MoD information system about members of the armed forces "which is of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism".

Finally, he was accused of breaching the Official Secrets Act between May 2019 and January 2022 by collecting or sharing information that could be "directly or indirectly useful to an enemy" - understood to be Iran, a state supporting Russia in its war in Ukraine and frequently considered hostile to the UK.

The simple mystery is how Khalife managed to get out. Delivery vans in prison are hardly a novelty and they are subject to security checks as they go in and out. It should have been possible to have spotted the prisoner by the simple means of using a mirror to search under the van.

Prison inspectors suggested the state of Wandsworth prison was to blame. Charlie Taylor, the

▼ *A CCTV image of the vehicle searched by police in the hunt for escaped prisoner Daniel Khalife*
PHOTOGRAPH: MET POLICE/PA

▲ *Security checks on the M20 near Ashford in Kent as the authorities searched for the escaped prisoner*
PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH FULLER/PA

▼ *Wandsworth prison, south-west London, where Daniel Khalife had a sought-after job in the kitchen*
PHOTOGRAPH: BELINDA JIAO

# 'Only a matter of time'

# Grim state of UK's prisons could have been factor

**Peter Walker**
*Deputy political editor*

While the extent of decrepitude in the nation's schools shown up by the crisis over aerated concrete might have caught some policymakers off-guard, a story that highlights the parlous state of the prisons service will have surprised almost no one.

There are two main problems with prisons: the crumbling state of the prisons themselves and the lack of space inside them. While they are interlinked, they do not have entirely the same causes.

Wandsworth prison in south-west London, from which the terror suspect Daniel Khalife escaped on Wednesday, is supposed to hold 900 men. But Steve Gillan, head of the prison officers' union, the POA, said it has 1,600 at present.

The picture with overcrowding is somewhat complex. The 120 prisons across England and Wales currently hold just over 87,000 people, 96% of them men, fewer than 1,000 people below the service's absolute maximum capacity. About 20% of prisoners are held in overcrowded conditions, often spending most of their time in cramped cells.

All this is not helped by the second part of the picture: the lack of new jail capacity, exacerbated by austerity, and the increasingly grim state of existing jails, with a backlog of maintenance estimated as costing over £1bn. A German court recently refused to extradite a man to the UK because of the conditions he would face there.

Added to this is the potential extra chaos of whether some prisons buildings are constructed using possibly crumbling reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (Raac), something the prison service has yet to uncover.

It can seem anomalous that prisons are so full when, in another failure of basic public services, police are charging fewer suspects and those who are charged often have to wait years for trial.

The answer is that, as well as people waiting long periods for their trial in jail on remand, sentences have become notably longer, rising more than 50% on average in the decade to 2022.

All of this has an obvious impact on the final part of the picture, and the one perhaps most relevant to Khalife's escape, seemingly strapped to the underside of a vehicle - staffing levels.

Gillan told Times Radio the 1,600 prisoners in Wandsworth were being overseen by a duty roster of 70 officers, a ratio that often meant shortcuts were taken when it came to security. Such an escape was "only a matter of time", he said.

"There's not enough security like perimeter checks and things like that are being cut back. People aren't getting enough time to do the security task that they should be doing."

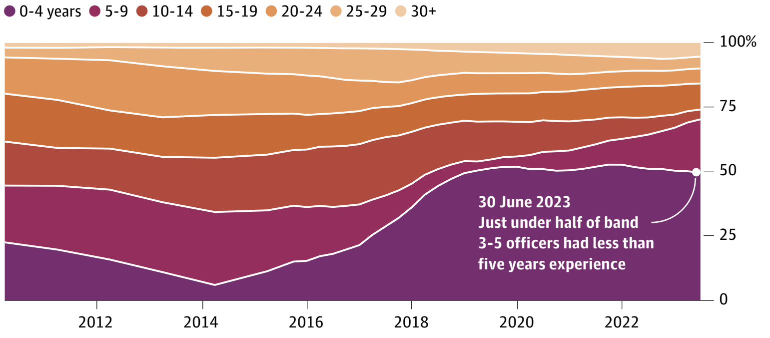
A workforce under extreme pressure is often one with a high turnover of staff - and this is very much the case in prisons. Nearly 12% of staff across the wider HM Prison and Probation Service leave each year, statistics from June showed, rising to 13.4% to what are known as band 3 to 5 prison officers, those who work and supervise on the frontline.

More than 36% of these prison officers have less than three years' service, notably up from the 30% seen a year ago. Fewer than a third of the frontline staff have served for 10 years or more.

The circumstances behind Khalife's escape are yet to be uncovered, and it could be the case that he would have got away even from a non-overcrowded and well-staffed prison. But it feels unlikely.

Successful escapes from higher-security jails such as Wandsworth are vanishingly rare and inevitably create headlines. And this time, much as with the Raac issue in schools, the incident puts a focus on the wider state of the prison service.

**High turnover is leading to fewer experienced prison staff**
*Quarterly, full-time band 3-5 prison officers in England and Wales, % share by years of service*




Source: HMPPS workforce quarterly. Note: bands 3-5 includes prison officers, supervising officers, officer specialists and custodial managers

## The unanswered questions

The escape of terror suspect Daniel Abed Khalife from Wandsworth, a category B prison, raises a number of questions:

**What was a terror suspect doing in a medium security prison?**
Serious terrorist suspects are normally held at Belmarsh high security prison, raising questions why Khalife was in Wandsworth. Alex Chalk, the justice secretary, told MPs he had asked for an urgent inquiry into why Khalife was at Wandsworth, but he said it was not always the case that prisoners held on terror offences were put in high security prisons, indicating Khalife may not have been judged a serious flight risk.

**How was it possible for Khalife to escape so easily?**
Prison breaks may be the frequent topic of TV and films but are rare in the UK, with only one recorded in England and Wales in 2021-22. It appears that the terror suspect and former soldier had obtained a coveted job working as a kitchen chef and, Chalk told MPs yesterday, that strapping had been found on the underside of the delivery van by which Khalife escaped. Normal procedure would be for vans coming in and out of a jail to be checked on the underside using mirrors, and a person hiding underneath should have been easy to detect.

**Was a lack of resources at Wandsworth a factor?**
Prison watchdogs, Labour and unions all argued that security at the Victorian-era prison, described by inspectors as "crumbling, over-crowded and vermin-infested", was compromised by staff shortages. The prisons inspectorate had previously concluded, following an unannounced inspection in September 2021, that staffing shortfalls at Wandsworth were preventing the running of "a decent and predictable regime", with "more than 30% of prison officers either absent or unable to work their full duties". Chalk, however, emphasised that "on the specific issue of staffing, the positions were staffed" on the morning of the escape and said the question was whether "the protocols were applied".

**Could there have been collusion to help Khalife escape?**
A former prison governor - John Podmore, who headed Belmarsh and Brixton prisons - said in a BBC interview that the escape of Khalife from Wandsworth could "possibly" have been an inside job. However, there is no firm indication this was the case, although the plan to escape under a delivery van, and the use of strapping, suggest some degree of sophistication and premeditation.

**Dan Sabbagh**

chief inspector of prisons said: "The issue that we are particularly concerned about is there are too many prisoners in Wandsworth for the amount of staff who are there."

Taylor was reflecting the findings of a damning inspection he conducted two years ago, in September 2021. Wandsworth was described as "crumbling, overcrowded, vermin-infested" and barely able to cope.

In conclusion, the inspectors said that "staffing shortfalls were preventing the prison from running a decent and predictable regime. More than 30% of prison officers were either absent or unable to work their full duties". A quarter had worked at the prison for less than a year, and more than a tenth had resigned during the same time.

What is not clear is whether that made a difference in Khalife's escape. Mindful of Labour attacks on the staffing crisis, Alex Chalk, the justice secretary, told MPs yesterday that "security positions were staffed", as he sought to hint at a lapse in standards rather than lack of resources.

There were other misjudgments. It is clear Khalife was not seen as a significant flight risk, despite the terrorism charges, because he was not held in a maximum security prison such as Belmarsh. Not only that, but he ended up being allowed to work in the kitchen. The use of strapping to help him hide suggests the escape was probably planned. Police said last night they were keeping "an open mind" as to whether anybody had helped him.

Sketch
John Crace

# Amid collapsing schools and prisons, Tory backbenchers pray for the torture to end

Things we'd quite like to see. It's been almost exactly a year since Liz Truss became prime minister. Since her departure 49 days later, she has made just two appearances in the Commons. Two more than her partner in crime Kwasi Kwarteng, admittedly, but just two nonetheless. Both were in debates on Ukraine. For reasons best known to herself, Liz believes she has played an integral part in Ukraine's war with Russia. Without her support, Volodymyr Zelenskiy would have surrendered long ago.

So to mark the anniversary, it would be nice if Truss could update us on what she's been doing. Who knows, she might even be leading the offensive to retake Crimea - if she could spare the time from posing as a tank commander for her Instagram account. She never could resist when she was foreign secretary.

But even if Liz has just been lying low at home in Greenwich, a catch-up would be great. In person in the Commons. To explain how she feels about the mini-budget, and whether losing the country billions and increasing interest payments for mortgage borrowers was worth it to give us all a feel of a different kind of economics. Or if that is still all too raw, maybe the Trusster could do a show and tell in the chamber. Starting with all the fluffy white towels she had to pay for from Chevening. Surely she owes us that. Her constituents might like to see her too.

Things we'd quite like to see. Gavin Williamson, the politician who thinks the ministerial code is for wimps, was ordered to apologise to MPs for bullying texts he had sent to the then chief whip, Wendy Morton. Gav reckoned the late queen would have been gutted to have learned that he had been left off the funeral invite list. He should have been in the front row alongside Prince effing Charles. So he was going to rip Morton's effing throat open. Charming.

On Monday evening at 6.45pm, Williamson made that apology. At a time when the chamber was almost empty. It would have had more meaning - or at least some meaning - if he had chosen a moment when someone might have been around to notice. Then it would have looked as if he cared. Instead he sneaked in and sneaked out. There again, he's almost never been in the Commons since he was sacked. Two days later he was all smiles having a laugh in Portcullis House coffee bar. That's the power of remorse for you.

Things we'd quite like to see. Rishi Sunak to correct himself for accusing Keir Starmer in prime minister's questions of never having mentioned crumbling school buildings before. Not only had the opposition asked multiple questions in the past two years but the Labour leader had raised this in a speech over the summer. Oh, whined RishGPT, but you only said the buildings were collapsing. You didn't say they were collapsing with Raac. We don't hear Sunak say much about governing with honesty, integrity and accountability these days.

▲ *Gavin Williamson, ordered to apologise for bullying texts, did so when almost no one was around*

*It would be nice if Liz Truss could update us on what she's been doing. Who knows, she might even be leading the offensive in Crimea*

But let's face it. We're not going to get any of these things any time soon. If at all. Our politics is far too broken. So we have to make do with what we've got. Which yesterday was a statement from the justice secretary on the escape of a suspected terrorist from Wandsworth prison. Cue loud cheers from Gillian Keegan in the Department for Education. For the first time in more than a week the government was facing a crisis not about Raac and ruin. If the police suspect Daniel Khalife had an accomplice, they could do worse than bring Keegan in for questioning.

Not that the Tories seem that bothered by the escape. It's just one more crisis in a neverending shitshow. Most backbenchers just want out. They've come back from their summer break to find there's no let-up to where they left in July.

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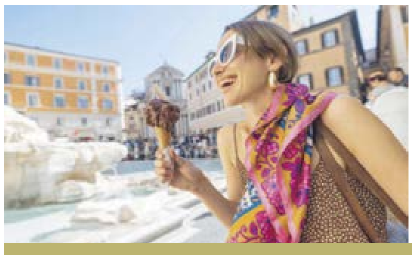

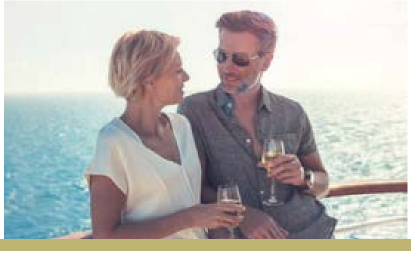

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# Mercury prize 2023: Ezra Collective claim first ever jazz victory

**Ben Beaumont-Thomas**

The 2023 Mercury prize has been awarded to Ezra Collective, the London band whose propulsive blend of jazz, funk and Afrobeat has electrified audiences and cemented the capital's jazz scene as one of the world's most exciting.

"We met in a youth club," said drummer and bandleader Femi Koleoso on accepting the award for the year's best British or Irish album for Where I'm Meant to Be, the band's second release. "This moment we're celebrating right here is testimony to good special people putting time and effort into young people to play music … let's continue to support that," he added, citing grassroots collectives in London such as Tomorrow's Warriors and Kinetika Bloco.

It's the first time a jazz artist has won the prize since its inception in 1992, and the quintet beat bookies-tipped artists such as the Irish drone-folk band Lankum and the rapper Loyle Carner.

At the ceremony at Hammersmith Apollo, Jamz Supernova, the DJ and spokesperson for the judging panel, said Where I'm Meant to Be was an "uplifting and timely record that represents the very best of where we are now in 2023".

Grounded in the infectious polyrhythms of Afrobeat - Koleoso was mentored by Fela Kuti's esteemed drummer Tony Allen - and capable of long-form improvisation as well as party-starting grooves and melodic themes, the group also comprises bassist TJ Koleoso, trumpeter Ife Ogunjobi, saxophonist James Mollison and keyboardist Joe Armon-Jones.

Bringing guest vocals to their album are Emeli Sandé, Sampa the Great and two previous Mercury nominees: rapper Kojey Radical and R&B-soul singer Nao.

In a five-star review on its release in November 2022, the Guardian's Kate Hutchinson said Where I'm Meant To Be was an "exceptional album that centres joy and community, radiates positivity and youthful abandon, and could well be the one to cross over to the big league". Their win finally brings true recognition from the prize for a British jazz scene that has generated global attention and a raft of new stars, after recent yearly - some have said tokenistic - inclusions on the shortlist for the likes of Nubya Garcia (whose band Armon-Jones also appears in), Moses Boyd, Seed Ensemble, Sons of Kemet, Dinosaur and the Comet is Coming.

Ezra Collective win £25,000, and join an esteemed group of previous prize winners, including rappers Skepta and Dave, Britpoppers Pulp and Suede, and the only two-time winner, PJ Harvey.

▲ *Fred Again was one of the artists nominated for the Mercury prize*

Arctic Monkeys were nominated for a fifth time, the joint highest number of nominations alongside Radiohead - though unlike Radiohead, they have actually won it, for their debut Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not in 2006.

Another previous winner, Young Fathers, were back in the shortlist, while J Hus, Jessie Ware and Carner all notched second nominations. The other nominees were Olivia Dean, Fred Again, Jockstrap, Raye and Shygirl.

The prize was voted on by judges from across the music industry: musicians Anna Calvi, Jamie Cullum and Hannah Peel; broadcasters Sian Eleri, MistaJam, Jamz Supernova and Danielle Perry; media figures Phil Alexander, Will Hodgkinson and Tshepo Mokoena; plus BBC 6 Music and Radio 2 head of music Jeff Smith, and Lea Stonhill, content manager at YouTube. Ezra Collective provided a rousing finale to proceedings.

# Kinetic joy Win makes award feel relevant once more

**Alexis Petridis**

▲ *Ezra Collective with the 2023 Mercury prize for their second album, Where I'm Meant to Be*
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

A slight sense of disbelief attended the announcement that Ezra Collective's Where I'm Meant to Be had been awarded the 2023 Mercury prize.

You could hear it in the audience's reaction - the cheer was underpinned by a sort of delighted gasp - and you could certainly see it in the band's: they literally collapsed in a heap on the floor by their table.

Their acceptance speech began with a thank you to God: "If a jazz band winning the Mercury prize doesn't make you believe in God, nothing will."

You could see why. The joke about the Mercury prize's tokenism when it comes to jazz and folk music has been running for almost as long as the prize itself. Virtually every year, a solitary artist from those fields gets nominated and invariably goes away empty-handed.

It's been mocked as a patronising pat on the head, but you seldom hear the artists themselves grumbling: mainstream exposure for jazz and folk is scanty at best and sales figures are seldom huge, making the publicity surrounding the prize and any resulting bump in sales more important than you suspect it is for, say, the Arctic Monkeys.

This year, however, felt slightly different than usual. As evidenced by the performances at the ceremony itself, it was a strong field, but there was a sense that Dublin quartet Lankum might actually be in with a chance - their intense, experimental approach to traditional Irish music is suffused with influences from deep in the musical leftfield and has attracted both blanket critical acclaim and an audience that one suspects don't usually spend much time with trad arr tunes. And the reception Ezra Collective's reading of Victory Dance was afforded seemed noticeably different from the polite applause that usually greets the jazz nominee on the night: it got a spontaneous standing ovation.

You could see why: it was joyous and funky and party-starting, as good an advertisement for seeing them live as can be imagined.

And you can see why Where I'm Meant to Be won. It stirs together Afro-Cuban rhythms and post-bop with rap - both Sampa the Great and 2022 Mercury nominee Kojey Radical are among the guests - dub, funk and dance music and transforms Sun Ra's Love In Outer Space into slick, jazz-inflected soul with a vocal by another former Mercury nominee, UK soul-R&B singer Nao.

It's an album where the influence of spiritual jazz co-exists with Afrobeat. It successfully captures the band's live energy, its kinetic power never dipping despite its 70-minute running time. It's approachable and celebratory without in any way seeming lightweight or drifting too far from the band's roots: an album that people who don't normally consider themselves jazz fans might fall for, but still resolutely a jazz album.

> *'An album where the influence of spiritual jazz co-exists with Afrobeat … approachable and celebratory'*

There are times when you wonder aloud at what the point of the Mercury prize is: when it feels like a meaningless addendum to mainstream success, when it appears to be simply telling people something they already knew.

A jazz album winning may well prove an aberration, and things may go back to business as usual next year, but if their victory means that Where I'm Meant to Be finds a wider audience than it has thus far, then the 2023 Mercury prize has done a good thing, and made itself seem worthwhile in the process.

# Remains of airmen 'found in wreckage' of wartime Lancaster

**Senay Boztas**
*IJsselmeer*

The remains of British airmen shot down over Dutch waters by Germany in the second world war may have been discovered during an operation to salvage their plane.

With the help of a €15m (£13m) national fund, Dutch experts have started to sift the wreckage of the Lancaster bomber, number ED603, which never returned from a raid on Bochum in Germany on 13 June 1943.

The plane was part of a Pathfinder force that gave the lead to 503 other bombers. But on its way back to the UK it was shot down and crashed in the waters of the IJsselmeer with seven men onboard.

The bodies of four men washed up within days and were eventually buried in the Netherlands but 27-year-old flight engineer Arthur Smart, 23-year-old mid-upper gunner Charles Sprack, and 21-year-old wireless operator Raymond Moore were still regarded as "missing".

The Dutch team have surrounded the downed plane with a huge metal box and are slowly pumping it clear of water. They confirmed they had found skeletal remains presumed to be those of the British fighters.

Capt Geert Jonker, commanding officer of the recovery and identification unit in the Royal Netherlands army, said: "We have found skeletal remains. At the moment, we can't say any more. There is no doubt that the remains we have found come from one of the missing airmen."

The salvage operation is expected to last five weeks. Jonker said that DNA tracing was unlikely to be used. "The main mission of my team is to establish the minimum number of individuals: three crew are unaccounted for, and it is up to us to look whether we have remains from the three people," he said.

"The goal of this national programme is to find missing airmen, to give them a grave with a name, and to give their relatives closure."

The crash site was first discovered in 1996 when a fishing crew hauled up a motor, pulled off the serial number and brought it to a local museum.

# Regulator turns gaze on 'eye-watering' bills charged by vet chains

**Kalyeena Makortoff**

The competition regulator is taking aim at the UK's £2bn veterinary industry amid fears that a surge in chain-owned surgeries may be leaving pet owners with dwindling choice and "eye-watering" bills.

The review by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is part of efforts to protect the 17m households who now own a pet in the UK - a figure that jumped significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The watchdog said it was concerned that a drop in independent vet practices across the industry - which accounted for just 45% of practices in 2021, compared with 89% in 2013 - had left households with few opportunities to shop around. That could result in poor information about pricing and treatment, particularly for urgent and life-saving treatments.

Overall, the annual cost of owning a dog is estimated to have jumped by 12.8% - about £256 - over the past year to about £2,500, according to the Office for National Statistics. Households expect to spend more than £39,078 during a pet's lifetime, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home figures suggest. A recent survey by the Dogs Trust charity showed four in five owners were worried about the costs of caring for their dog.

According to Confused.com, the average cost of vet treatments for gastroenteritis is £592, for diabetes £186, and £966 for lameness. The average annual cost of dog vaccinations is £70, according to Comparethemarket.

The CMA's chief executive, Sarah Cardell, said: "Caring for an ill pet can create real financial pressure, particularly alongside other cost of living concerns. It's really important that people get clear information and pricing to help them make the right choices."

Cardell said the recent wave of vet surgery consolidation meant it was the "right time" to look at how the market was working. "When a pet is unwell, they often need urgent treatment, which means that pet owners may not shop around for the best deal, like they do with other services.

"This means they may not have the relevant information to make informed decisions at what can be a distressing time."

The regulator is now calling for evidence from owners and people who work in the industry, including veterinary surgeons, nurses, and practice managers.

Owners will be asked to share how they choose their vet surgeries, the pricing of treatments, and whether they are aware their vets are part of a larger chain that might own other surgeries in the area. They are also being asked to share whether they rely on insurance to cover all or part of services and treatments.

The watchdog is also seeking information on how prescriptions and medications are arranged as well as access for out-of-office and emergency vet services, particularly where options are limited.

Sue Davies, head of consumer protection policy at Which?, said: "Consumers have no choice but to turn to vets when their beloved pet is sick or injured - often footing eye-watering bills in the process."

She said the consumer advocate group had uncovered a "number of areas of concern, such as pet owners not knowing the price of treatments until after their appointment, people being unaware their vet is part of a chain and difficulties shopping around for cheaper medication."

"The Competition and Market Authority's review must consider these issues and lead to a more competitive veterinary industry which makes it easier for pet owners to shop around for the best option for them and their pet," Davies added.

The CMA said it would provide a further update on the review and propose next steps in early 2024.

*The cost of owning a dog has jumped by 12.8%*

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# House prices fall by 4.6% in biggest annual decline since slump of 2009

**Kalyeena Makortoff**

House prices suffered their sharpest annual drop in 14 years as the seasonal summer slump and high mortgage costs dragged on sales.

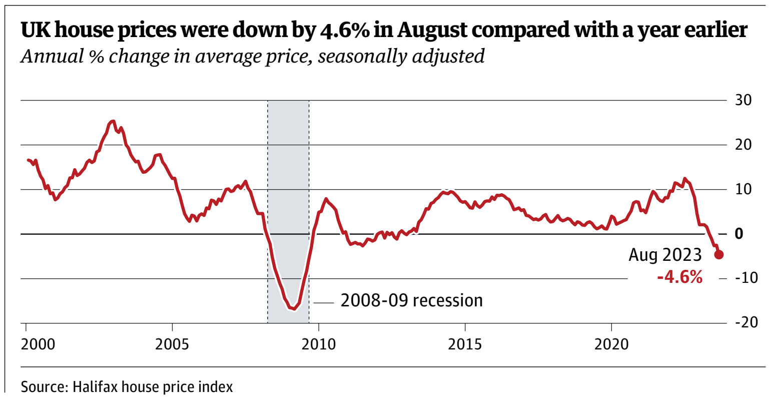
Data released by Halifax, Britain's biggest mortgage lender, showed that prices fell by 4.6% in August, marking the biggest year-on-year decrease since 2009. It means that the price tag of the typical UK home has dropped by about £14,000 over the past 12 months to £279,569.

That is the lowest level since early 2022 but still leaves average prices £40,000 higher than before the pandemic, when lockdowns fuelled demand for larger homes in a "race for space". The latest annual decline, however, suggests homeowners continue to be deterred by high interest rates, which have been increased by policymakers in an attempt to combat inflation but have caused higher mortgage costs.

The Bank of England has raised interest rates 14 times since December 2021 to 5.25%, pushing the average two-year fixed rate mortgage to about 6.67%, according to the latest figures from Moneyfacts.

Kim Kinnaird, the director of Halifax Mortgages, said a traditional slowdown in house buying over the summer months also had played a role in last month's slump.

"Market activity levels slowed during August and while there is always a seasonality effect at this time of year, it also isn't surprising given the pace of mortgage rate increases over June and July.




"While these did ease last month, rates remain much higher compared with recent years. This may well have prompted prospective buyers to defer transactions in the hope of some stability, and greater clarity on the future direction of rates in the coming months.

"The market will continue to rebalance until it finds an equilibrium where buyers are comfortable with mortgage costs in a higher range than seen over the previous 15 years," Kinnaird said.

Halifax is predicting a further fall in property prices into the new year, and while the trend is unlikely to be welcomed by current homeowners, Kinnaird said it may come as a relief to those hoping to get on to the property ladder who have more purchasing power due to rising wages.

"Income growth has remained strong over recent months, which has seen the house price to income ratio for first-time buyers fall from a peak of 5.8 in June last year to now 5.1. This is the most affordable level since June 2020, and will be partially offsetting the impact of higher mortgage costs," Kinnaird said.

Rates could also begin to ease, taking the pressure off of the wider housing market.

Andrew Bailey, the governor of the Bank of England, said yesterday that interest rates were nearing the peak, suggesting the cycle of rate hikes could soon come to an end. However, the Bank is expected to raise rates again at its next policy meeting on 21 September by a quarter of a point to 5.5%.

# 'It's slowed people down' Wales gets ready for rollout of 20mph limit

**Steven Morris**

Chris Davies, the genial host of a B&B in the south Wales village of St Brides Major, was in no doubt. "I've lived here all my life and the speed limit was always 30mph. People would shoot through. Since it's been 20mph it's been brilliant. The roads are quieter and safer for everyone, including my six grandchildren. It takes an extra 40 seconds to go from one end of the village to the other. If 40 seconds saves a life it's well worth it."

Davies was hosting a different kind of party yesterday – a visit by the Welsh first minister, Mark Drakeford, to remind the citizens of the country that in 10 days' time a default 20mph limit would be in force on most roads that were currently set at 30mph.

St Brides Major, in the Vale of Glamorgan, was one of eight communities chosen for a trial run of the scheme and Drakeford was there to meet residents, including children, plus safety campaigners, to hear about their experiences.

"We love it," said Giselle Hodgkinson, who runs Zumba sessions. "It's so much less stressful now for the ladies coming to the class. I think it's slowed people down and made people kinder."

Toni Marley, who had a business on the main street, said she saw a boy knocked over and killed by a motorist legally travelling at 30mph. "I know that child would be alive now if that driver had been doing 20. I'm all for it."

According to Transport For Wales figures, the proportion of drivers moving at or below 24mph since the 20mph limit came to St Brides has grown by more than 90%.

Not all are convinced it is working. "I support the idea but people are still ripping through," said Rebecca Roberts, who worked in a soft furnishing shop. Others described impatient motorists overtaking drivers obeying the 20mph limit and complained that cyclists often whizzed through over the 20mph mark.

▲ *The Welsh first minister, Mark Drakeford, yesterday in St Brides Major, where speed limits, right, are now 20mph*
PHOTOGRAPH: DIMITRIS LEGAKIS/ ATHENA PICTURES

The Labour-led government said the reasons for making the change included reducing deaths and injuries (thus pressure on the NHS), encouraging more people to walk or cycle, and safeguarding the environment. It believes the change could lead to 40% fewer collisions and prevent up to 10 deaths and 2,000 injuries a year.

The government accepts that not all 30mph areas will be suitable for the change. These roads will be known as "exceptions" and local authorities will consider with their communities which roads should remain at 30mph.

*'With the 20mph limit it takes an extra 40 seconds to go from one end of the village to the other. If it saves a life it's well worth it'*

**Chris Davies**
*B&B owner*

The policy is despised by some. Concerns include the cost; the implementation will come to more than £30m and a government report has said the net loss to the economy because of slower journey times may be £4.5bn over 30 years.

Besides this, paramedics and police worry that response times could be slower; and eyebrows were raised when the government said firefighters as well as police would clamp down on speeding motorists in the 20mph areas.

The shadow transport minister, Natasha Asghar, said her party, the Welsh Conservatives, backed 20mph limits in heavily pedestrianised areas but a nationwide scheme would be "madcap, ludicrous".

Adie Parry, a Labour councillor in Buckley, north Wales, said there should not be a one-size-fits-all. "If you have a village with twisty roads and a small population it might make sense. Our town is completely different – 20,000 people with almost everyone leaving and arriving twice a day."

Nia Lloyd-Knott, a Safer St Brides campaigner, said of the policy: "I feel much safer as a resident, parent, walker, cyclist and driver. Hopefully the other nations will be inspired to follow."

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# Model Linda Evangelista reveals that she had double mastectomy

**Sian Cain**

The model Linda Evangelista has revealed she has had cancer twice, and had a double mastectomy after her first diagnosis with breast cancer five years ago. The 58-year-old told the Wall Street Journal the cancer had been detected in 2018 during an annual mammogram appointment.

"The margins were not good, and due to other health factors, without hesitation because I wanted to put everything behind me and not have to deal with this, I opted for a bilateral mastectomy. Thinking I was good and set for life. Breast cancer was not going to kill me," she said.

Four years later, in July last year, she was diagnosed with cancer of the pectoral muscle, for which she had chemotherapy and radiotherapy. She told her doctor to "dig a hole" in her chest, she recalled, saying she added: "I don't want it to look pretty. I want you to excavate. I want to see a hole in my chest when you're done. Do you understand me? I'm not dying from this."

Speaking before the new Apple TV+ docuseries The Super Models, in which she is interviewed along with Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford and Christy Turlington, she said her prognosis was "good but not great". She added: "I know I've one foot in the grave but I'm totally in celebration mode."

She said she had wanted to keep the news quiet for a while. "I thought, I will share this one day but while I am going through it, absolutely not. I don't want the Daily Mail waiting outside my door like they do every time something happens. 'Linda seen for the first time since blah blah blah.'"

▲ *The model has had breast cancer and cancer of the pectoral muscle*

# Labour peer condemns 'cover-up' of policeman's deception

**Aamna Mohdin**
**Rob Evans**

A prominent Labour peer has condemned a "vile" alleged cover-up of an undercover police officer's 19-year relationship with a woman he deceived using his fake identity.

Shami Chakrabarti, the Labour peer and former shadow attorney general for England and Wales, is calling on the home secretary to address the lack of safeguards around undercover operations after the latest revelations.

She made her remarks as it emerged that several state institutions were aware of the relationship, which resulted in the couple having a child together, years before the victim herself was informed of her partner's true identity.

Between 2013 and 2018, a police force, the police watchdog for England and Wales, and a judge-led public inquiry into undercover policing all became aware the undercover officer had deceived a woman into a serious, long-term relationship.

However, the victim in the case was not told until 2020, when Avon and Somerset police, which employed the officer, undertook a U-turn and decided to inform her. It had known about the relationship since 2013.

Chakrabarti said: "The scandal here is not only the vile behaviour of an individual officer but the alleged institutional cover-up and victim-bullying by Avon and Somerset police." She said the latest case provided fresh impetus to revisit and revise the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021, which allows undercover agents to commit crimes while carrying out their duty.

"Perhaps the home secretary might divert her gaze from culture wars and leadership ambitions and attempt to address the gaping lack of safeguards around undercover operations?" she said.

On Wednesday, the Guardian revealed how an undercover police officer used his fake identity to deceive a woman into the 19-year relationship in which they became partners and had a child together.

The relationship began in 2001. But it was not until 2020 that the woman, whom the Guardian is referring to as "Mary", discovered that the man she had recently agreed to marry was in fact a police officer who had used his fictitious identity on the birth certificate of their son.

While Mary, who is black, has chosen not to speak publicly about the 19-year deceit, her family have accused Avon and Somerset police of bullying and threatening them into silence over the last three years. They accuse senior officers of trying to co-opt them into a cover-up.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has launched several investigations into the case, including one that is considering why police chiefs at Avon and Somerset waited seven years before telling Mary the truth. The investigations also encompass West Midlands police, which employed the undercover officer when he first met Mary in the early 2000s.

The IOPC is understood to have been informed about the case in 2018. Sir John Mitting, the retired judge heading the public inquiry into undercover policing, is said to have been informed about the case in 2016. Both the IOPC and Mitting declined to comment when asked if they were complicit in the failure to notify the woman of her fiance's real identity until 2020.

◀ *Shami Chakrabarti is calling for more safeguards on undercover operations*
PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN BRADY/PA

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# Unlikely encounter Gazza's kiss for prince on charity visit

Caroline Davies

The former England footballer Paul Gascoigne had an affectionate encounter with the Prince of Wales after popping up in a Pret a Manger where the royal was highlighting his homelessness campaign. The one-time England midfielder was among staff and diners at the sandwich chain in Bournemouth as William dropped in to help out as part of his Homewards initiative.

The two shook hands as William inquired after Gascoigne, 56, who has faced problems with his mental health and addiction. A beaming Gascoigne, who said he lived in nearby Sandbanks, replied he was "a lot better" before leaning in to embrace the prince and plant a kiss on his cheek.

▲ *Ex-footballer Paul Gascoigne met William at a Pret branch in Dorset*

William was at the shop to learn more about the company's commitment to expand its longstanding Rising Stars programme, which helps break the cycle of homelessness by providing support, training and employment. Over the next five years it is expected to expand by 40%, supporting at least 500 people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness into jobs at Pret's UK shops. Afterwards William said it had been a "very interesting morning".

The prince was also visiting AFC Bournemouth's Vitality Stadium to hear about the club's work in the community to support those at risk of homelessness, and commitment to expanding their projects as part of Homewards.

The visits follow the June launch of Homewards, which aims to play a role in demonstrating that it is possible to end homelessness - "making it rare, brief and unrepeated".

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# Elizabeth II Monarch in tribute to mother on anniversary

Caroline Davies

King Charles has paid tribute to his late mother, Queen Elizabeth, and renewed his pledge to serve the nation in a message today marking the first anniversary of her death and of his accession.

In a signed message he wrote: "In marking the first anniversary of her late majesty's death and my accession, we recall with great affection her long life, devoted service and all she meant to so many of us.

"I am deeply grateful, too, for the love and support that has been shown to my wife and myself during this year as we do our utmost to be of service to you all."

To mark the anniversary, he released one of his favourite official portraits of the late queen, captured at Buckingham Palace on 16 October 1968 as part of an official sitting granted to Cecil Beaton.

The image, which shows a 42-year-old Elizabeth wearing her Order of the Garter star, was first shown at the National Portrait Gallery between November 1968 and March 1969. Beaton first photographed the late queen in 1942, and continued to photograph her and other members of the royal family, but the 1968 sitting was their final sitting together.

The king and queen will mark the anniversary at their Scottish retreat, where they are spending their traditional summer break.

The Prince and Princess of Wales, who are visiting west Wales, will commemorate the life of the late queen at a small, private service at

▲ *Liz Truss said the queen had told her that they would meet again soon*

St Davids cathedral. Afterwards they will meet members of the community in the adjacent cloisters, with guests including those who met Queen Elizabeth II during her visits to the city.

St Davids is the only cathedral in the UK where, since the reformation, the sovereign has had a special stall in the choir among the members of the chapter. The late queen sat there on four occasions.

Rishi Sunak praised the late monarch's wisdom, grace and "sharp wit". The prime minister said gratitude for her service and sense of duty continues to grow, a year on from her death.

Elizabeth told Liz Truss they would be "meeting again soon" at her final official engagement two days before her death, the former prime minister has revealed.

She also recalled the king was "very, very resolute" when she spoke to him on the phone the day his mother died and his reign began.

Truss told GB News: "In the meeting at Balmoral, she was absolutely on top of what was happening. She was very, very keen to reassure me that we'd be meeting again soon. It was very important to her."

Truss added: "Although she was physically quite frail, she was absolutely mentally alert."

There was no indication the queen was gravely ill, she added.

She recounted how she was told of a worsening situation on 7 September - with the postponement of a privy council meeting. "I arrived just before 6pm for the meeting," she told GB News's royal correspondent, Cameron Walker. "Everybody was there waiting around and we waited for a few minutes and then the news arrived that the queen would no longer be able to do the meeting.

"And that was the first I heard of it. But clearly it was a very ominous sign She said of 8 September: "Things were clearly getting even worse the next day so it was a dawning realisation I think, not just for me, but for my colleagues, that we were facing [it]."

Describing the scene in No 10 when confirmation of the queen's death reached them at about 4.30pm, she said: "We were in the Downing Street flat with officials, other people. So when the news came through, it was sort of confirming all the worst fears that we'd had."

The Duke of Sussex arrived in the UK yesterday to attend a charity awards ceremony, but it is not thought that he will visit his father in Scotland. Harry was celebrating the resilience of seriously ill youngsters and their families, who are supported by the charity WellChild, and at the weekend will be in Dusseldorf for the opening ceremony of the Invictus Games.

▼ *Royal knees-up: Charles, Camilla and Princess Anne at this month's Braemar Gathering Highland games*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARK CUTHBERT/UK PRESS/GETTY

# King Charles the cautious Continuity but little reform in first year on throne

**Caroline Davies**

As the king spends the first anniversary of his mother's death, and of his accession, at his Scottish Highland retreat today, he may reflect on a period of transition not seen in 70 years.

Suggestions that King Charles, 74, sees himself as a "caretaker king", keeping the throne warm for the new prince of Wales who will be the real reformer, is not a scenario recognised at Buckingham Palace. There have been no eye-catching reforms, but there are clues to his aspirations in the small changes.

Charles has turbocharged royal receptions, harnessing their soft power, sources point out, in the knowledge he can no longer speak out publicly on subjects he remains passionate about. So, the "convening" king is a label it seems he will accept. When advised by Liz Truss's government not to attend the Cop27 climate conference in Egypt, he instead hosted an eve of Cop27 reception at Buckingham Palace. He found a way to remain a leader in the climate crisis field, albeit within the new constitutional parameters.

Now, "informal formality" are the bywords. Receptions are larger-scale events, such as one held in February for the British east and south-east Asian communities. The nature of these receptions has changed from the late queen's days, precisely because Charles is no longer able to become involved in certain areas, sources indicate.

As head of state he also sees himself as a symbol of continuity, say sources. In the political turbulence of the early days of his reign, he was on to his second prime minister not longer after meeting his first.

Charles has made his debut as king on the international stage, addressing the German Bundestag, a first for a British monarch, and a similar honour will be accorded in France this month. He has also hosted the US president, Joe Biden, and the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa.

But while he would like to be seen as a unifying figure, the dynamics of his own fractured family have dominated the year. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex's onslaught against the royal family in general, and Prince Harry's criticism of his father in particular, have played out across the world. From Charles there has been silence. So far, it is said, there has not been a day when he has thought saying something was going to make things better. His love for his younger son, though, was demonstrated in his invitation to Harry and Meghan to his coronation - although only Harry turned up, and made a swift return to Los Angeles.

Another early challenge was the race row involving Lady Susan Hussey, the late queen's lady-in-waiting, and a black female charity reception guest, Ngozi Fulani of Sistah Space. Some royal observers were surprised at the speed with which Charles's aides dealt with the fallout. Hussey resigned from the royal household for "unacceptable and deeply regrettable comments", and later offered an apology in person, which Fulani accepted.

For Charles, who is very close to Hussey - a godmother to Prince William - it was a difficult situation.

> ***'There hasn't yet been the Commonwealth activity in the way you might expect'***
>
> **Joe Little**
> *Majesty magazine*

"One could almost argue it was dealt with too swiftly. The reaction to that was surprising, particularly from the Prince of Wales," said Joe Little, the managing editor of Majesty magazine, noting Hussey was soon back in the royal fold.

A further challenge is the slimmed-down monarchy Charles is said to have wanted, which now looks positively skeletal. The Princess Royal told Canada's CBC News that the concept "doesn't sound like a good idea from where I'm standing". With Prince Andrew and Harry out of the picture, what to do with the patronages is a big question.

In the official coronation photograph featuring the remaining 11 working royals, the Duke of Kent and Princess Alexandra are 87 and 86 respectively, the king, 74, the queen, 76, Princess Anne, 73, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester 79 and 78 respectively, and the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh 59 and 58, while the Waleses are both 41.

"The Duke of Kent and the Gloucesters and Princess Alexandra, they can't take on anything more. They will keep going as long as they can," said Hugo Vickers, a royal historian. "You've lost Prince Andrew and Prince Harry. It's a big issue, I think. You can see what Princess Anne means."

The royal family's ageing could affect their popularity. While the most recent YouGov poll shows a majority (59%) think Charles is doing well, support for the institution in general fell as those questioned got younger, with 80% of the over-65s approving but only 37% of 18- to 24-year-olds.

There is also an increasingly vocal republican movement. While said to be genuinely pleased with the response he gets on the streets during engagements, he cannot ignore the protests and chants of "not my king". The over-zealous policing of the coronation led to 64 people being arrested, including some who were not even protesters. Only five people have so far been charged, and half told they will face no charges or fines.

One of Charles's initiatives is that profits from the crown estate's lucrative windfarm deal will go not to him but be earmarked for public services. However, at the same time the monarchy is due to receive a huge pay increase, with public funding through the sovereign grant to rise from £86.3m to £126m in 2026, thanks to the formula based on crown estate profits.

His address to the nation after his mother's death laid out a blueprint for his reign: his solemn pledge to "uphold the constitutional principles at the heart of our nation" and acknowledgment that his new responsibilities meant it would "no longer be possible for me to give so much of my time and energies to the charities and issues for which I care so deeply".

Vickers said: "It was brilliant. I don't think the late queen had to set out a blueprint about what she was going to do, but that is what we expect these days. And it certainly hit all the nails on the head. And he has kept to it."

Charles had previously insisted he knew he couldn't meddle once king. "But saying it and doing it are two very different things, and that doesn't mean to say that he won't at some point interfere," said Little.

His first big personal project as monarch, to be launched in the autumn, is a national initiative tackling food waste, led by Dame Martina Milburn, the chief executive of the Prince's Trust. "And you wonder how political that might be, so that remains to be seen," Little added.

One omission in his first year has been Commonwealth activity - he is king of 14 other countries, with some of them debating whether to ditch him. Perhaps it is down to lack of time, says Little. "But there hasn't yet been the Commonwealth activity in the way you might expect there to have been."

By and large, it is Charles the cautious king we have seen so far. "He is the best-prepared Prince of Wales that the UK has ever had. Clearly we are unlikely to celebrate the silver jubilee of King Charles III. But he could be king for 20 years," said Little. "To be described as a 'caretaker king' for two decades is doing him a great disservice. He clearly has a lot to offer. We have yet to see some of his potential. But it's early days."

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# Labour receives £10.4m boost to election war chest

**Rowena Mason**
*Whitehall editor*

Labour had a record quarter for funding of more than £10.4m, showing the party is outgunning the Conservatives financially in the run-up to the next election.

The party's coffers were boosted by a £3m donation from David Sainsbury, the supermarket baron, as well as £2.2m from Gary Lubner, who made hundreds of millions of pounds running the company behind Autoglass. Sainsbury had previously withdrawn his backing for the party during the Jeremy Corbyn era and in 2019 gave £8m to the Liberal Democrats, but returned to supporting Labour last year.

The former Labour MP Fiona Mactaggart contributed £250,0000 to the party's campaign funds. Labour also received £2.7m in public funding and donations from trade unions, with £290,125 from GMB and £215,740 from Usdaw, the shopworkers' union.

Other major donations included £50,000 from Grant Mansfield, the founder of a TV production company, Plimsoll, and £50,000 from Gareth Quarry, a businessman who switched support from the Tories to Labour.

*The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, visits an AstraZeneca life sciences facility in Macclesfield yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: PETER BYRNE/PA

The Conservatives were close behind with donations of about £10m, largely from private individuals. They accepted £5m from Frank Hester, the founder and chief executive of the Phoenix Partnership, a healthcare software company, as well as £1m from the billionaire hedge fund manager Alan Howard.

A £350,000 sum was given by a company owned by Sandy Chadha, the chief executive and shareholder in the Supreme Group, with interests in the vaping market. Bassim Haidar, a telecoms billionaire, gave £286,300.

> **£24m**
> *Total donations to all parties in the second quarter of 2023, as reported to the Electoral Commission*

The Conservatives have raised £22m so far this year, while Labour has brought in about £16m. Turmoil within the Tories led to donations falling to just £7.5m in the second half of last year, contributing to an overall loss for 2022.

The Liberal Democrats raised about £2m, including a £25,000 donation from the former leader Nick Clegg, while the Scottish National party reported £360,000 in contributions.

Donations to all parties reported to the Electoral Commission for the second quarter totalled £24m.

Louise Edwards, the Electoral Commission's director of regulation and digital transformation, said the data was an important part of transparency. "We've seen for some time that public confidence in the transparency of party and campaigner finance is declining," she said. "We continue to recommend to the UK government that it introduces laws to help protect parties from those who seek to evade the law and give voters more confidence in the process."

# Man held over homophobic nightclub attack

**Nadeem Badshah**

A 19-year-old man has been arrested in connection with a homophobic attack outside a nightclub in south London in which two men were stabbed, police have said.

Both victims were taken to hospital after the incident in Clapham on 13 August. They have since been discharged. The two men, one in his 20s and the other in his 30s, were outside the Two Brewers on Clapham High Street when they were stabbed in an unprovoked attack that is being treated as a hate crime.

Police said the suspect was arrested in South Norwood, south-east London, yesterday on suspicion of two counts of grievous bodily harm and remains in police custody.

Det Supt Vanessa Britton said: "The two victims have been informed and continue to be supported by our dedicated LGBT+ community liaison officer." Anyone with information is asked to contact police on 101 or tweet @MetCC and quote CAD 7198/13Aug.

| Representative Example | Duration of Device Plan | Upfront Cost | Monthly Device Payment | Credit Amount | Total amount payable for device | Interest rate (fixed) | Representative APR | Cash price (to buy outright) | Airtime Plan until March 2024 | Airtime Plan April 2024 - March 2025 | Airtime Plan April 2025 - March 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Google Pixel 7 Pro 265GB | 36 months | £30 | £19.64 | £707 | £737 | 0% | 0% | £737 | £19.99 | £19.99 + RPI% announced in Feb 2024 = Price A | Price A + RPI% announced in Feb 2025 |

***Each year your Airtime Plan will be increased by the Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation announced in February plus 3.9%. If RPI is negative, we'll only apply the 3.9%. You'll see this increase on your April 2024 bill onwards. See o2.co.uk/prices.**
£19.64 Device Plan for 36 months and £19.99 monthly rolling Airtime Plan. £500 saving consists of £212 discount applied to Device Planand further £288 saving achieved by £8 per month discount on the 1GB, 5GB, 25GB, & 30GB Airtime Plans over 36 months. Offer ends 20 September 2023. O2 Switch Up cannot be used with the first 90 days from purchase. New & upgrading O2 customers (not previously on O2 Switch Up as part of a Plus Plan) who purchase a Plus Plan tariff directly from O2 only. The Bolt On is included within any Plus Plan. It will be removed automatically if your existing device plan is paid in full, or if you transfer your existing tariff from a Plus Plan to a Custom Plan. Eligible customers may swap their existing handset device (tablets etc are excluded) during the eligible period of their contract, subject to satisfying our terms & conditions. If approved, we will keep your device & pay off your existing contract before you get your new device. If refused, you will only be able to upgrade via our standard methods & early upgrade charges may apply. All requests to swap must be processed via one of our retail stores, unless we agree otherwise. Customers may only take out a new Custom Plan or Plus Plan following a successful device swap. Custom Plans & Plus Plans are subject to availability, status, credit checks & payment by direct debit. New contract price may be higher than existing depending on plans chosen. Customers will not be eligible to redeem any O2 Recycle offers when using O2 Switch Up. This Bolt On is also subject to your standard terms & conditions of service & is only for your personal non-commercial use. For full terms, see: https://www.o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/mobile/o2-switch-up.

**In G2**
**From Casablanca to Brief Encounter**
*The greatest doomed romance films – ranked*
*Page 2 →*

News
Diplomacy

# Sunak ready to discuss corporate visas deal with Modi, No 10 hints

**Kiran Stacey**
*Political correspondent*

Rishi Sunak is willing to discuss corporate visas as part of trade talks with India, Downing Street officials have indicated, as he flies to Delhi this weekend hoping to lay the groundwork for an agreement later this year.

Sunak lands in Delhi today for the weekend's G20 summit of world leaders, but he will begin his trip with a key meeting with Narendra Modi at which officials say the prime ministers are likely to discuss the sensitive subject of the prospective trade deal.

Their countries have been negotiating a deal for over 18 months, and missed a deadline of last October to complete it. Sunak has ruled out finalising a quick-fix agreement ready for this weekend's summit, but officials are increasingly confident they might be able to sign one later this year.

As Sunak looks for a breakthrough, Downing Street said the UK would not change its immigration policies to secure a deal. But a spokesperson added that the issue of intra-company transfers could be included.

"The only aspect of the movement of people covered by a [free trade agreement] is business mobility – that's the temporary movement of business people for specific purposes," the prime minister's spokesperson said. They added: "I can't get into more detail about what's being discussed, but there are no plans to change our immigration policy to achieve an FTA."

Downing Street's language tallies with that of the Indian government. Vikram Doraiswami, the Indian high commissioner to the UK, told Times Radio yesterday that India was not asking for more visas, but a simplification of the application process for workers to be transferred between the two countries. "We never said that the visas [themselves] are part of our ask," he said.

Despite insisting he will not change immigration policies to get a deal, Sunak faces potential resistance to any changes to the visa regime from his own MPs, including the home secretary, Suella Braverman.

Braverman reportedly told Sunak at this week's cabinet meeting she was unhappy at the idea of allowing any more immigration, given the record levels of net migration in 2022, when it reached more than 600,000.

Even if the two countries do reach an agreement on visas, however, there remain other areas of contention, including intellectual property protections and rules governing where goods can be manufactured to qualify for lower tariffs. Officials acknowledge it will take direct discussions between Sunak and Modi to clear the final hurdles.

Sunak is also hoping to use the summit to push for stronger action against Russia, coordinated moves to bring down global inflation and an agreement on how to regulate technologies such as artificial intelligence.

He will speak twice during the summit: once during a session focused on climate change and again during a discussion about technology and innovation. He is also likely to have bilateral discussions with world leaders, though it remains unclear whether he will meet Li Keqiang, the Chinese premier, who is attending in place of the president, Xi Jinping.

The trip marks the first time since he became prime minister that Sunak has travelled to India, the country where his grandparents and his wife were born. His wife, Akshata Murty, will travel with him. Many in India are eagerly awaiting her arrival, given her status as the daughter of Narayana Murty, the co-founder of the multinational IT services company Infosys, and one of the country's richest tycoons.

However her presence could also be an awkward reminder of the potential conflict of interest facing Sunak as he tries to negotiate the trade deal, given Infosys could be a major beneficiary of any moves to streamline the intra-company transfer regime. Sunak will meet a small number of Indian business leaders during his trip, but sources indicated his father-in-law would not be one of them.

◀ *Rishi Sunak with the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, during the G7 summit in Japan in May*
PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/AP

▼ *A man in front of a mural for the G20 summit, whose slogan is 'one Earth, one family, one future'*
PHOTOGRAPH: ARUN SANKAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# G20 summit US aims to exploit Xi absence to build influence in developing countries

**Patrick Wintour**
*Diplomatic editor*

The run-up to this weekend's G20 summit in Delhi has been dominated by two issues: the host's efforts to project India under its prime minister, Narendra Modi, as a superpower; and the intriguing decision of Xi Jinping not to attend. What exactly world leaders will discuss in their two days together is not yet clear.

Yet this year's G20 - the 24th since the format began in 1999 - is potentially a make or break moment for the organisation, which includes the world's 19 wealthiest nations plus the European Union as a bloc. With one part of the world increasingly gathering in the now expanded Brics format, where China has a leading role, and the west comfortable with its annual G7 summitry, the G20 is the best remaining hope of keeping the principle of multilateralism alive. The UN secretary general, António Guterres, spoke yesterday of a risk of fragmentation of the world order, with his own organisation paralysed by the war in Ukraine.

Such are the divisions about that conflict, according to Tristen Naylor, an assistant professor of international relations at the University of Cambridge, "it is more possible than ever before there will be no joint communique". Both China and Russia have refused to allow Ukraine to be discussed.

One suggestion is that the G20 just repeat what was agreed at the last G20 in Bali, but Russia says western intervention has been so intense since then that the Bali baseline cannot hold.

The absence of a joint statement would be hugely disappointing to India, Naylor said, since it sets such store by acting as the broker on behalf of the global south.

Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, said the G20 should never be seen as an "arena for power politics" and claimed no previous G20 host had consulted as widely with the developing world as India on what it wanted discussed. He said the views of 125 countries had been sought, while the African Union has at last been given a permanent seat at the G20 top table.

The US is determined to exploit Xi's late withdrawal. Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser, has said that if Xi wants to spoil Modi's big moment that is up to him, adding that China appeared to be spurning a chance to engage constructively and solve the multilateral problems facing developing countries.

The US has also contrasted China's economic slowdown with the relative turnaround in its own economy. Sullivan has promised the US will come to the summit with a "value proposition" on debt relief, technology, bank reform and action on the climate crisis. The package includes sovereign debt restructuring for low- and middle-income countries that Sullivan said could ultimately leverage more than $200bn (£160bn), starting with an initial Congress-endorsed $25bn.

Sullivan has also embraced a better-funded World Bank under the new leadership of Ajay Banga as "a positive, affirmative alternative lending method to what is a much more opaque, more coercive method, which is the Chinese Belt and Road initiative method".

In practice many of the ideas on multilateral bank reform stem from a huge, Indian-commissioned report by Harvard's Prof Larry Summers and NK Singh, the president of the Indian Institute of Economic Growth. Unlike the US, China has been cautious about its recommendation that the international development finance system could provide $500bn more in external financing by 2030.

The dispute on the climate crisis, according to India, focuses on phasing out fossil fuels and the date by which renewable energy capacity could be tripled. China is leading a group - which includes Russia and Saudi Arabia - opposing the tripling of renewable capacity by 2030 and a cut in greenhouse gas emissions of 60% by 2035.

It is likely the G20 will also expand the use of climate transition finance to cover adapting the production of materials such as cement and steel. There will also be pressure on the rich countries to fulfil a commitment made three years ago to provide $100bn a year in climate finance to low- and middle-income countries.

India's negotiating hand at the G20 is limited in two ways. First, its energy minister, RK Singh, has often said Indian emissions per head are some of the lowest in the world and he has no plans to phase out coal use.

Second, the UN's Cop28 climate conference, starting at the end of November in Dubai, provides a ready reason for all sides to agree to defer difficult issues.

Joe Biden will do all he can to praise Modi on his chosen themes such as digital transformation, since India is seen as the critical ally in Washington's conflict with Xi.

No one can be sure why the Chinese president will not be there. Evan Feigenbaum of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace thinktank said his absence was odd given countries favourable to China such as Saudi Arabia would have been present. He said: "Either he is preoccupied domestically about changing China's economic model or trying to signal that he can opt in and out of these groups."

If it is the latter, India's chosen summit slogan - "one earth, one family, one future" - looks somewhat threadbare.

▲ *From top: a poster of Narendra Modi welcomes delegates; the main G20 venue with its statue of Shiva; paramilitary guards at a checkpoint*

## Russian relations

**Rishi Sunak will use a crunch meeting with Narendra Modi in Delhi to push the Indian prime minister to take a tougher stance towards Russia, Downing Street said yesterday.**

**Sunak and Modi are due to meet this weekend before the G20 summit to talk about a range of issues including a potential free trade agreement. Downing Street said the prime minister would also use the meeting to raise the issue of the relationship between Delhi and Moscow, given India continues to import Russian oil and weapons.**

**Sunak is hoping to use the summit to persuade world leaders to criticise Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea grain initiative, the deal agreed between Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the UN last summer under which Ukrainian grain supplies and food products were allowed to be exported.**

**Russia pulled out of the deal after accusing western countries of not honouring their commitment to allow it to export increased amounts of agricultural produce. Sunak plans to use the summit to argue that Moscow's decision has added to global inflation and is hurting the world's poorest people. President Vladimir Putin of Russia has told Modi he will not attend the summit. Kiran Stacey**

# Eyewitness

**▼ Paris**
*The facade of the Opera Garnier, under renovation until 2024, has been decorated by JR, a street artist*
PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS PADILLA/AP

# Social media firms to face huge fines over animal cruelty posts

**Dan Milmo**
*Global technology editor*

Social media firms must remove content featuring animal cruelty from their platforms or face the threat of substantial fines under the latest change to the online safety bill.

Ministers said causing unnecessary suffering to an animal will become a "priority offence" in the bill, which means tech firms will have to proactively prevent such material from reaching users. Failure to do so could result in a fine of £18m, or up to 10% of a company's global revenue. Other priority offences under the bill include child sexual abuse images and terrorist content.

The technology secretary, Michelle Donelan, said an animal-friendly country like the UK should not tolerate such cruelty. "Social media sites must not be used as platforms to promote the sadistic and harrowing actions of some deeply depraved internet users," she said in a statement.

Under the amendment to the bill, expected to receive royal assent this month, platforms must put systems in place to deal with material that encourages or facilitates animal torture. The amendment had been proposed in the Lords by Labour peer Lady Merron.

The government cited the example of the Monkey Haters case, a BBC investigation which uncovered a global monkey-torture ring. The BBC found that Facebook was hosting "dozens" of monkey-torture groups, although the social media network said it had taken down the groups brought to its attention by the BBC and said it did "not allow the promotion of animal abuse".

Ministers are moving to tie up loose ends with the legislation after the Lords backed several changes.

On Wednesday the government sought to head off a threatened exodus from the UK by encrypted messaging apps, saying that a controversial clause in the bill paving the way for message scanning would only be used if the process was "technically feasible" and if it met minimum standards of privacy and accuracy.

# Theatre Truth bombs and fine wine in a sitcom-sharp frothy satire

**Never Have I Ever**
*Minerva Theatre, Chichester*
★★★☆☆

**Arifa Akbar**

Money and friendship don't mix, as the old adage goes. They certainly don't for four old university pals in this satire, which blends fine wines with sexual confessions and identity politics.

Adaego (Susan Wokoma) is married to Tobin (Greg Wise), who has invested £125,000 into Kas (Amit Shah) and Jacq's (Alex Roach) trendy new restaurant. Tonight is the night the latter couple reveal their impending bankruptcy, and Tobin's lost investment. But the vintage wines they serve up to soften the blow fuel a drinking game that unearths a more contentious buried secret.

Directed by Emma Butler and written by Deborah Frances-White, the comedian and creator of the hugely successful podcast The Guilty Feminist, it is entertaining fare with some zinging lines, and a fine cast who have evident synergy on stage. But the fun, frothy satire loses its fizz in the course of almost three hours and the drama groans under the weight of all the issues it takes on.

Jacq is a plain-speaking bisexual who grew up in white, working-class poverty. Kas is her wet British Asian boyfriend while Adaego is a sloaney black British journalist, and Tobin a performatively apologetic "straight white male" who brags about giving up a TEDx talk to leave the path open for "women and people of colour".

Culture wars ensue, and each character embodies an ethical or ideological position, often telling us the position they are taking. Tobin claims to want to listen and learn rather than exercise his privilege but is too predictably hypocritical and even mansplains the etymology of the word "woke" to his wife. She speaks about cultural appropriation but is drowning in class privilege.

There are debates on poverty, race, sexuality, appropriation, the hypocrisies of the liberal elite and Brexit. These are often amusing but lack surprise or bite. Because the characterisation is so two-dimensional, we do not believe in this group, or their anger.

No character is likable - except perhaps for the dithering Kas. Tobin becomes the villain of the piece when the plot takes an improbable turn into territory resembling the 1990s film Indecent Proposal, but this does not carry the emotional drama or credibility that it should.

Yet still it is eminently watchable, rather like a TV sitcom in tone. The high-concept restaurant, designed by Frankie Bradshaw, is well put together and there are striking visual effects to Ryan Day's lighting.

Repeated references to the world of podcasts come through the show and some of its comedy sounds like riffs from Frances-White's podcast, whose fans will no doubt lap this up.

*Until 30 September*

◀ *From left, Susan Wokoma, Greg Wise, Alex Roach and Amit Shah in Never Have I Ever*
PHOTOGRAPH: HELEN MURRAY

**'A pencil with teeth'**
**The tiny shark that tries to eat boats**
*Page 28*

**Stolen Generations**
**'Possible graves' at Australian boys' home**
*Page 30*



# World

## Mexico set for first female president as main parties pick women candidates

**Thomas Graham**
*Mexico City*

Mexico will almost certainly have its first female president in 2024, after the governing Morena party and the opposition coalition both chose women as their candidates.

The former Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum has been named Morena's candidate, despite runner-up Marcelo Ebrard's last-minute denouncement of the process and demand for it to be redone.

Sheinbaum is a climate scientist-turned-politician widely believed to be the preferred choice of the president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who is unable to run again.

She has presented herself as a continuity candidate and stands to benefit from López Obrador's enduring popularity as well as the support of the state apparatus during the coming campaign.

Until recently, Morena had seemed assured of victory in the June 2024 elections, but the dramatic emergence in recent months of the senator Xóchitl Gálvez as the opposition candidate has upended expectations.

Gálvez is a businesswoman who became a senator in 2018 and has seized media attention with her aspirational story of growing up with an Indigenous father and *mestizo* (mixed race) mother in Hidalgo state, before working her way through public university and into business and politics.

In just months Gálvez has risen to become the candidate of a broad opposition coalition that includes the PAN, PRI and PRD, the country's three oldest mainstream parties.

▲ *Claudia Sheinbaum celebrates after being chosen as the ruling Morena party's candidate. Left, Xóchitl Gálvez, choice of the opposition and her main challenger*
MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: CLAUDIO CRUZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sheinbaum and Gálvez were chosen through a series of polls intended to show greater transparency and public participation than in the past, when presidents had the habit of handpicking their successors. However, neither process went smoothly.

The opposition coalition never conducted the final consultation of the process it set out, because another candidate, Beatriz Paredes, withdrew, thus handing the candidacy to the frontrunner Gálvez.

Meanwhile Ebrard has accused the party of favouritism towards Sheinbaum. He declared his team had found anomalies in 14% of the ballots cast in the national poll Morena conducted to decide the candidacy.

Ebrard's demands to redo the process have gone unheeded and he has since ruled himself out of contention for Morena.

Yesterday, López Obrador dismissed Ebrard's complaints, and expressed his full support for Sheinbaum. "I celebrate what was done yesterday. It's something historic, unprecedented, and I don't see any problem," said the president, describing Sheinbaum as "an honest woman with convictions and principles".

With the two candidacies confirmed, it seems all but certain Mexico's next president will be a woman for the first time, with Sheinbaum remaining the favourite.

"She will have López Obrador's support, but building her own narrative, forging her own image - that's her first challenge," said Carlos Ramírez, a political analyst. "She needs him, and he is popular. Why break with that? But she has to find a middle way."

It remains to be seen whether Gálvez can convert her media buzz into electoral support. As the candidate of Mexico's traditional parties, she is vulnerable to the charge that she is backed by a despised corporate aristocracy.

But despite having been in politics for years she has not been tainted by corruption scandals.

"Gálvez needs to sell herself as an outsider, a figure of civil society, but without losing the support of the party structures - she needs them to win," said Ramírez. "That's going to be a very delicate balance."

Despite representing the conservative PAN party as senator, Gálvez has backed progressive policies on issues such as the environment, abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.

Such a stance on social justice could eat into Morena's support - but it could also alienate the more conservative voters the PAN counts on.

## Activists welcome court ruling to decriminalise terminations

**Lillian Perlmutter**
*Mexico City*

Human rights activists in Mexico have welcomed a historic ruling by the supreme court that decriminalised abortion but warned that the decision would not automatically make terminations accessible for all Mexican women.

Wednesday's unanimous decision stripped away federal criminal penalties related to abortions - but not the many local laws banning the procedure, which remain on the books in 20 of Mexico's 32 states.

Senator Olga Sánchez Cordero, a former supreme court justice, tweeted that the ruling showed Mexico was advancing towards "a more just society in which the rights of all are respected".

Employees at government health facilities will no longer need to worry about federal penalties for carrying out an abortion, and the ruling is expected to provide pro-choice activists with a powerful precedent as they continue their state-by-state campaign to roll back restrictions.

But campaigners cautioned that many facilities and medical workers were likely to continue refusing to carry out terminations - sometimes in all cases, and sometimes if the woman is unable to prove she does not have the means to care for a child.

"Though this is a big deal, it could still be very difficult for people to get abortions. In some places they will still likely refuse access to women for many different reasons.

"We're going to have to see whether the effect is immediate, or whether this ruling really only affects the criminal system," said Tyler Mattiace, a Mexico researcher at Human Rights Watch.

Mexico's congress will also need to pass an accompanying resolution to eliminate abortion from the penal code for the legalisation to become a reality.

"The ruling is worth celebrating, but it doesn't mean our work is done," said Ana Gonzalez, an activist in the northern city of Monterrey. "We still have a lot of work to make abortion a cultural reality in Mexico - not just a structural, legal right."

Gonzalez said that activists across Mexico had been working for decades to ensure that women in most areas can find help getting clandestine abortions.

## Fall in abortions in Texas sparks health concerns

**Carter Sherman**

Only 17 legal abortions were recorded in the state of Texas in the first four months of 2023, according to a new report, raising concerns that women have begun to seek alternative routes to terminating their pregnancies.

Research by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission found the procedures were performed "due to medical emergency" and "to preserve [the] health of [the] woman".

Pregnancies can be legally terminated in Texas in the case of a medical emergency. But experts said it was highly unlikely that in four months only 17 people in the state had faced emergencies that threatened their pregnancies or their lives.

Texas is home to almost 7 million women between the ages of 15 and 49, raising fears some may have had to travel for lifesaving care while others might be going without care or are becoming so ill they miscarry.

"I was shocked," said Dr Pratima Gupta, a board member of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, who noted that "this is such a low number".

Since a cascade of state abortion bans took effect after the fall of the 1973 landmark Roe v Wade ruling last year, doctors across the country have said the vague exceptions in the bans are forcing them to delay or even deny care to people in need.

The statistics from the Texas health agency also emphasise how little is known about the reality of post-Roe pregnancies in the US.

# Russia launches fourth attack in five days on food exports in Izmail

**Shaun Walker** *Kyiv*
**Julian Borger** *Washington*

Russia has maintained its bombing campaign against Ukrainian food exports with the fourth drone attack in five days on grain silos and other infrastructure around the port of Izmail along the Danube river.

The governor of the Odesa region, Oleh Kiper, said yesterday's attack lasted three hours, and the general prosecutor's office said two truck drivers were hurt and several homes damaged by blast waves. The Ukrainian military said agricultural facilities were damaged but did not give details.

Vladimir Putin has sought to cut off Ukrainian exports of cereals since July, when he walked out from the Black Sea grain initiative which had been brokered by the UN and Turkey to allow safe passage for ships carrying Ukrainian grain. The collapse of the initiative caused a rise in global grain prices with a direct impact on humanitarian supplies to areas of potential famine, but the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, failed to persuade Putin to return to the agreement at a meeting on Monday in the Russian resort of Sochi.

Russia has focused bombing raids on Izmail, the main Ukrainian port along the Danube, from where grain has been loaded on to ships which have taken cargo out through Romanian, Bulgarian and Turkish territorial waters, as well as westwards by river to the rest of Europe.

The bombing of grain facilities came as the Kremlin criticised the US for its decision to supply depleted uranium tank rounds to Ukraine, calling it a "criminal act".

Sergei Ryabkov, a Russian deputy foreign minister, said it was "a reflection of Washington's outrageous disregard for the environmental consequences of using these kind of munitions in a war zone".

Russia has several depleted uranium weapons in its arsenal. According to the Berlin-based International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons, there have been multiple reports of Russian use of such weapons in Ukraine, but they have not so far been verified.

Depleted uranium rounds are effective in piercing armour. They are not banned under international law but there are health concerns over their use. They are less radioactive than natural unrefined uranium, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has found radiological risk to the people is not significant in situations where there is depleted uranium in the general environment. However, the IAEA also found there is a potential risk of radiation effects for individuals who come into direct contact with such fragments or ammunition.

The delivery of US depleted uranium weapons was announced at the start of a visit to Ukraine by the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken. Yesterday Blinken visited Yahidne, part of the northern Chernihiv region which was occupied by Russia during the first weeks of the war. He was shown a school basement where Russian forces kept dozens of villagers captive for a month.

"This is just one building … [but] this is a story we've seen again and again," Blinken said.

Over two days, Blinken met with the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, and other top officials, in part to hear how Ukraine's counteroffensive against Russian forces is going. In recent weeks, unnamed US officials have briefed statements expressing disappointment in the speed and tactics of the counteroffensive, which has infuriated Ukrainian officials.

Blinken said the slow pace was understandable. "The Russians had a lot of time in this case to prepare for the counteroffensive. They put tens of thousands of mines in place," he told NBC News in Kyiv. "Other defensive fortifications, the Ukrainians are working their way through it. But at the end of the day, they have a determination. They have a desire that I think will outmatch whatever the Russians put into this."

Mykhailo Podolyak, a key adviser to Zelenskiy, told the Guardian in Kyiv that once the Russian defensive lines were breached, the offensive would start to move much quicker.

"It's not the same Russia that was in Kharkiv and Kherson last year, they ran away quickly, now they understood that they had to invest in serious defences … We will get through these lines, and as soon as we do so we will see a very different situation," he said.

Podolyak added that the size and strength of Russia's defensive lines was also an indicator that the Kremlin has scaled back its war ambitions and with the exception of a few local areas, has no plans to attempt major offensive actions.

"They don't have the reserves, the resources or the desire for further advances. The main thing they want to do is keep the lines fixed. They don't want to go forward but they also don't want to allow retreat as that will start the process of the disintegration of the country," he said.

As the counteroffensive continues, Zelenskiy has undertaken a political shakeup, firing the defence minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, who had headed the ministry since before the outbreak of full-scale war. The ministry had been plagued by a number of corruption scandals in recent months.

"We need more trust. Trust in the decisions that are being made, trust in the procurement that is carried out, trust in the supplies," Zelenskiy told the new minister, Rustem Umerov, yesterday. Umerov, a skilled negotiator known to have strong contacts in the Middle East and Turkey, said he aimed to strengthen Ukraine's international alliances and to develop "probably even unexpected partnerships".

In the eastern city of Kostiantynivka, close to the frontlines, funerals began yesterday for those killed during a strike on a crowded market in the city the previous day.

Mykola and Natalia Shyrai, a married couple who were selling flowers in the market and were killed during the strike, were buried in a village near Kostiantynivka. The strike killed 16 people and injured 32.

Blinken said the attack was a reminder of "what Ukrainians are living with every day".

▼ *Antony Blinken, US secretary of state, visiting Chernihiv, regained from Russian occupation, this week*
PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/GETTY

## Depleted uranium: uses and warnings

The US has announced it is sending depleted uranium anti-tank rounds to Ukraine, following Britain's lead in sending the controversial munitions to help Kyiv. The 120mm rounds will be used in the 31 M1A1 Abrams tanks the US plans to deliver to Ukraine in the coming months. They were developed by the US during the cold war to destroy Soviet tanks, including the same T-72 tanks Ukraine faces.

**What is depleted uranium?**
Depleted uranium is a byproduct of the process to create the enriched uranium used in nuclear fuel and weapons. Though incapable of generating a nuclear reaction, it is more dense than lead.

"It's so dense and it's got so much momentum that it just keeps going through the armour – and it heats it up so much that it catches on fire," said Edward Geist, a nuclear expert at the US-based Rand research institution.

When fired, a depleted uranium munition becomes "essentially an exotic metal dart fired at an extraordinarily high speed," Rand defence analyst Scott Boston said. This means it cuts through a tank's armour instantly before exploding in a burning cloud of metal.

**Does it pose a health risk?**
Depleted uranium munitions are not considered nuclear weapons but do emit low levels of radiation. The UN nuclear watchdog has said their handling "should be kept to a minimum". The International Atomic Energy Agency said depleted uranium was mainly a toxic chemical rather than a radiation hazard. Particles can be inhaled or ingested, and some can enter the blood stream. "High concentrations in the kidney can cause damage and, in extreme cases, renal failure," the IAEA said.

Such munitions, as well as depleted uranium-enhanced armour, were used by US tanks in the 1991 Gulf war against Iraq's T-72 tanks and again in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as in Serbia and in Kosovo. A recent review of studies in BMJ Global Health highlighted "possible associations" of long-term health problems in Iraqis linked to depleted uranium use. An analysis from the World

▼ *A strike on Kostiantynivka killed 16 people and injured 32 in a market*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRIY REZNIKOV/GLOBAL IMAGES UKRAINE/GETTY IMAGES

Health Organization concluded that "in some instances the levels of contamination in food and groundwater could rise after some years" and should be monitored.

**How has Russia reacted?**
The Russian embassy in Washington denounced the US decision as "an indicator of inhumanity", adding that "the United States is deluding itself by refusing to accept the failure of the Ukrainian military's so-called counteroffensive".

In a social media post, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed an increase in cancer had been noted in places where ammunition with depleted uranium was used.

In March, when Britain said it would supply the shells, the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, said Moscow would "respond accordingly" to weapons with what he called a "nuclear component". He later warned that Russia would station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, and in July said it had already shipped some.
**Staff and agencies**

## Starlink
# Musk 'closed network to stop drones'

**Julian Borger**
*Washington*

Elon Musk ordered his Starlink satellite communications network to be turned off near the Crimean coast last year to hobble a Ukrainian drone attack on Russian warships, according to a new biography.

CNN quoted an excerpt from the biography - Elon Musk by Walter Isaacson - which described how armed submarine drones were approaching their targets when they "lost connectivity and washed ashore harmlessly".

The biography, due out next week, alleges Musk ordered Starlink engineers to turn off service in the area as he feared Vladimir Putin would respond with nuclear weapons to an attack on Russian-occupied Crimea.

Musk's threats to withdraw Starlink communications at various stages of the conflict have been previously reported, but this is the first time it has been alleged he cut off Ukrainian forces in the middle of a specific operation. The date of the would-be attack was not given.

Musk, the CEO of the Tesla electric car company and SpaceX rocket and spacecraft manufacturer, as well as owner of X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, initially agreed to supply Starlink hardware to Ukraine after the Russian invasion disrupted its communications. But he reportedly had second thoughts after Kyiv succeeded in repelling the initial Russian assault and began to counterattack.

"How am I in this war?" Musk asked rhetorically in an interview with Isaacson. "Starlink was not meant to be involved in wars. It was so people can watch Netflix and chill and get online for school and do good peaceful things, not drone strikes."

Neither X nor SpaceX replied to requests for comment.

According to the extract, Mykhailo Fedorov, one of Ukraine's deputy prime ministers, pleaded with Musk to restore Starlink communications.

According to Isaacson's account, Musk refused, saying Ukraine was "now going too far" and was threatening to inflict a "strategic defeat" on the Kremlin.

# Biden prepares to ward off impeachment threat as Republicans pursue son Hunter

**David Smith**
*Washington*

The White House is bracing for an autumn of political trench warfare after prosecutors pursuing Joe Biden's son on a gun possession charge said they would seek a criminal indictment by the end of the month.

The prospect of Hunter Biden standing trial is likely to energise Republicans preparing to launch an impeachment inquiry into the president even as Congress tries to avert a government shutdown.

The White House has reportedly set up a "war room" of two dozen lawyers and aides to combat the Republican effort, partly by studying how Bill Clinton turned his 1998 impeachment to his advantage.

Long a political liability for his father, Hunter Biden bought a pistol in 2018 and allegedly lied on a federal form by stating he was not a drug user at the time. In a Wednesday court filing, the special counsel David Weiss said the government would seek a grand jury indictment before 29 September.

The development followed the collapse of a plea deal under which Hunter Biden would have entered into a deferred prosecution agreement over the gun charge and plead guilty to not paying taxes on $1.5m in income between 2017 and 2018.

His lawyer, Abbe Lowell, insisted the deal was still in effect. "We believe the signed and filed diversion agreement remains valid and prevents any additional charges from being filed against Mr Biden, who has been abiding by the conditions of release under that agreement for the last several weeks," Lowell said.

The case has become a political lightning rod. Republicans accused the justice department of concocting a "sweetheart deal" and raised the prospect of impeaching the president over unsubstantiated claims that he had played a role in his son's foreign business affairs during his time as vice-president.

Hunter Biden has been the target of congressional investigations since Republicans gained control of the House in January. Three committees are pursuing several lines of inquiry.

> *'There is no evidence that links President Biden to anything that Hunter Biden was doing'*
>
> **Dan Goldman**
> *House Democrat*

▲ *President Biden's White House is said to have set up a 'war room'*

They have obtained thousands of pages of financial records from members of the Biden family through subpoenas to the treasury department and financial institutions.

Marjorie Taylor Greene, a far-right Republican from Georgia, argues without evidence that the allegations against Joe Biden are more serious than those against Donald Trump, who faces 91 criminal counts in four jurisdictions. Greene told the Guardian: "You can't even compare it: there's Joe Biden's justice department and Democrat DAs [district attorneys] charging President Trump to try to make him look like a criminal when everyone is ignoring the real proof that Joe Biden has made tens of millions of dollars and you can't add up his paycheck and equal that. The math isn't there."

But Republicans have failed to produce evidence that Biden directly participated in his son's work, though he sometimes had dinner with clients or greeted them on calls.

Dan Goldman, a Democratic congressman, defended Biden: "Yes, there are bank records, there are emails, there are text messages. The Republicans are incorrect, however, in asserting that any of those documents provides a link to President Biden or demonstrates any kind of misconduct."

Goldman, who before running for office was lead counsel in the first impeachment of Trump, added: "There is no evidence in any way, shape or form that links President Biden to anything that Hunter Biden was doing. And so here we are heading into a so-called impeachment inquiry based on fiction."

Though Senate Republicans have voiced scepticism, the momentum behind an impeachment inquiry in the House may prove unstoppable in the coming months. Speaker Kevin McCarthy told the Fox News network recently: "If you look at all the information we have been able to gather so far, it is a natural step forward that you would have to go to an impeachment inquiry."

Trump, the clear front-runner for the party's presidential nomination in 2024, is urging House Republicans to move quickly. He said in an interview on Real America's Voice: "I don't know how actually how a Republican could not do it."

# 'A pencil with teeth'

# Meet the tiny shark that tried to eat a catamaran

Henry Belot

The small sharks that damaged a catamaran off the coast of Cairns in Queensland, Australia, have been described as "pencils with teeth" and they have a history of trying to eat inanimate objects, including submarines.

Three people were rescued from the inflatable vessel and the Russian Geographical Society - which was involved with the sailor's round-the-world expedition - confirmed that the hull was attacked by cookiecutter sharks in the Coral Sea.

Marine biologists believe the attack was likely to have been "a classic case of mistaken identity" from a "supercool" little shark that glows in the dark and has a very big attitude and a capacity to do some damage, despite its size.

**What is a cookiecutter shark?**

Daryl McPhee, associate professor of environmental science at Bond University in Queensland, said cookiecutters are usually about 15cm-20cm (6in-8in) long but can reach 50cm. He said they "really just look like a pencil with teeth".

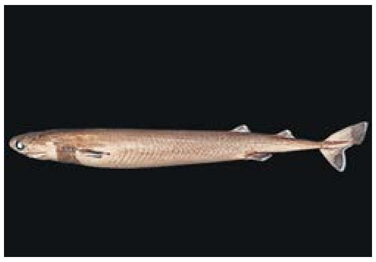
"They'll find a large animal like a whale or a dolphin, living or dead, and attach themselves to it. They'll twist and literally pull out a biscuit-sized chunks of flesh. They can do that repeatedly," McPhee said.

Prof Jodie Rummer, a marine biologist at James Cook University, said the cookiecutter was technically a parasite and behaved very differently to other sharks.

"They're called the cookiecutter shark because they don't actually swallow their prey," Rummer said. "They just take little bite-size morsels out of the side of them.

"They're bioluminescent too, they glow. They're a really cool species of shark. This unfortunate incident has given us an opportunity to learn about them."

▲ *The mouth of a cookiecutter, which takes small bites out of its prey rather than eating them whole*



▼ *The tiny shark is usually about 15cm-20cm long and is bioluminescent*

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE MILLER

**Will this thing kill me?**

An encounter with one of these would not be pleasant but there is no record of cookiecutters killing people - though they have tasted human flesh. In 2017, one swam through a swimming enclosure on Magnetic Island, Queensland, and bit a seven-year-old on the leg.

Rummer said cookiecutters were opportunistic feeders with limited vision that will have a go at anything they come across. They can cause problems for larger animals such as whales by leaving them with open wounds. "That's an entry point for infection," Rummer said. "It would evoke an immune response in the whale and probably cause that whale to expend a lot of energy fighting off infection."

**Has this happened before?**

McPhee said cookiecutters are known to bite inanimate objects and have attempted to eat submarines and undersea cables.

National Geographic has reported on cookiecutters causing damage to a nuclear submarine, attacking "exposed soft areas including electrical cables and rubber sonar domes".

Rummer said it was likely that the sharks mistook the catamaran for a large carcass. She said they spend most of the day in deep waters and surface from dusk to dawn looking for "cookies".

"If you can imagine, they've got limited vision and it's dark," she said. "They see an inflatable catamaran with a big surface area that is soft and flat. 'Is it a whale? Let's have a look. Oh, yep, that tastes like rubber. It's not for me.'

"The other aspect is this species does often travel in schools and if they're all going at this inflatable thinking it's a potential food item, that's where you get damage as there are multiple bites."

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# Ex-Mossad chief says 'apartheid' forced on Palestinian population

**Chris McGreal**

A former head of the Mossad intelligence agency has said Israel is imposing a form of apartheid on the Palestinians, joining a growing number of prominent Israelis to compare the occupation of the West Bank to South Africa's defunct system of racial oppression.

But Tamir Pardo's views will have added impact because of the high regard for Mossad in Israel and because they come at a time when far-right members of Israel's government are moving to kill off any prospect of an independent Palestinian state.

▲ *A Palestinian protester argues with a member of the Israeli security forces near Nablus, in the West Bank* PHOTOGRAPH: JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP VIA GETTY

Pardo told the Associated Press that Israel's mechanisms for controlling the Palestinians, from restrictions on movement to placing them under military law while Jewish settlers in the occupied territories are governed by civilian courts, matched the old South Africa.

"There is an apartheid state here," he said. "In a territory where two people are judged under two legal systems, that is an apartheid state."

Pardo, 70, was appointed to head Mossad in 2011 by Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister then and now. Netanyahu's Likud party said Pardo "should be ashamed" of his comments. "Instead of defending Israel and the Israeli military, Pardo slanders Israel," it said.

Successive Israeli governments have fought back against accusations of apartheid by characterising them as antisemitic out of concern the charge will fuel a boycott movement or open the way to prosecutions under international laws against apartheid. But such allegations become harder to dismiss when they come from those within the Israeli establishment.

Pardo told the AP his views on the system in the West Bank were "not extreme. It's a fact". He also warned that what has been described as Israel's "forever occupation" threatens its existence as a Jewish state. "Israel needs to decide what it wants," he said. "A country that has no border has no boundaries."

Pardo is among the highest ranking former officials to draw the once taboo parallel with the old South Africa. Israel's former attorney general, Michael Ben-Yair, said last year "that my country has sunk to such political and moral depths that it is now an apartheid regime".

The former speaker of the Israeli parliament, Avraham Burg, and the renowned Israeli historian, Benny Morris, are among more than 2,000 Israeli and American public figures who have signed a recent public statement declaring that "Palestinians live under a regime of apartheid".

The open letter calls on US Jewish groups to speak out against the occupation of the Palestinian territories as "the elephant in the room" in the mass Israeli protests against Netanyahu's deeply divisive judicial reforms.

Moves which it said, are intended to "annex more land, and ethnically cleanse all territories under Israeli rule of their Palestinian population".

# France follows Germany with cheap rail pass

**Agence France-Presse**
*Paris*

France is to launch a cut-price monthly rail pass valid on certain trains nationwide next summer, copying a successful move in Germany to encourage greener travel.

The rail pass would cost about €49 (£42) a month and allow users unlimited travel on TER regional trains and intercity trains, the transport minister, Clément Beaune, told France 2.

Beaune acknowledged the idea followed Germany's Deutschlandticket, launched in May, which allows unlimited travel on regional and local transport for €49 a month.

He said: "The ideal is to have something a little like what the Germans and other European countries have … to encourage train use," and that "if possible" the French pass would also cover local travel by bus, metro and tram within cities.

The Austrian rail operator, ÖBB, said on Wednesday it would run a night train between Paris and Berlin, starting in December.

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# Stolen generations scandal: survivors want boys' home dug up in search for bodies

*Uncle Roger Jarrett told of ritual punishments*

▲ *An aerial view of the old Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Training Home, left, where an estimated 400 to 600 Aboriginal boys between the ages of five and 15 were incarcerated under the policies of the Stolen Generations*
COMPOSITE AND PHOTOGRAPH: BLAKE SHARP-WIGGINS/ VICTORIA HART/KBHAC

**Lorena Allam**
**Sarah Collard**

Multiple sites of possible secret or "clandestine" burials have been discovered in the grounds of one of the most violent and abusive institutions of Australia's Stolen Generations era - Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Training Home on the north coast of New South Wales.

At least nine "suspicious" sites of possible graves have been identified by experts surveying the area using ground-penetrating radar, Guardian Australia can reveal.

The NSW government is aware of the discovery and received a report on the survey six months ago. It highlighted "high-priority anomalies" in the ground at the home, which show "signal patterns that in other contexts have proven to be human burials" and cannot be explained by other information sources.

"Some evidence supports the use of cadaver dogs in finding buried human remains," the report said.

It added there was a possibility that "graves may occur" in other areas not already investigated. It recommended further physical searches of the entire property near the town of Kempsey.

If human remains were found in those areas, the report said, "they would likely be of the clandestine burial type and not typical Christian burials".

It is understood the report's authors urge caution about interpreting the results, as some of the anomalies could be archaeological as well as forensic. If forensic (less than 100 years old),police would need to be called in. However, the authors note the only way to determine for sure if there are bodies buried on the site is to excavate.

The survivors' organisation Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) is calling on the NSW and federal governments to urgently fund further searches of the entire property. It also wants excavation at the high-priority areas to determine whether some may be children who died at Kinchela and were buried in secret.

"I'm hoping that there's nothing there. Just as simple as that. But with the way that those people were and the way that they flogged us, it wouldn't surprise me at all," said the KBHAC chairman, Uncle James Michael "Widdy" Welsh.

The report was prepared by archaeologists for the NSW government at the request of the Kinchela survivors, who have long maintained Aboriginal boys died at the home, either as a result of brutal physical punishment and neglect or because they may have "met with foul play".

> ***'I'm hoping there's nothing there, but the way those people were, it wouldn't surprise me at all'***
>
> **Uncle James Michael 'Widdy' Welsh**

Kinchela was run by the Aborigines Protection Board, later called the Aborigines Welfare Board, under the NSW government from 1924 until it closed in 1970.

An estimated 400 to 600 Aboriginal boys between the ages of five and 15 were taken away from their families and incarcerated there under the laws and policies of the Stolen Generations.

Survivors recall being referred to by a number, not by their names. They were flogged or chained to a tree overnight for wetting the bed. They were told they weren't Aboriginal, that their families didn't want them or their parents were dead.

Uncle Roger Jarrett recalled being one of those chained overnight to a tree as punishment.

"Over the back, there's the fig tree. It had a six-foot chain on it. If a boy said something trivial, they'd cut sleeves out of an old sugar bag, put it on and wet it. Take him out there, they chain him up, padlock them and leave them there," he said.

Uncle Vince Wenberg remembered a "sadistic" manager in the 1950s who used a cat-o'-nine-tails. Another manager would masturbate in front of the boys or take them into his office.

"I never had much to do with him myself. I didn't get … it's only the other boys. I think he used to do it. It was very sickening. It's hard to speak about it now," Uncle Vince, who died in 2020, said in an oral history interview in 2001.

Many survivors talked about being "sent down the line".

"Each and every day you got a flogging. Some of the boys said trivial things like they might have said someone's name. They'd get you sent down the line," Uncle Roger said.

"They would put 30 this side and 30 that side and they'd send this boy down. You'd have to punch him hard and if you didn't punch him hard enough, the staff would walk behind you and belt the crap out of you with a cane. If it was not hard enough for them, they'd send you down the line."

Survivors say they are frustrated that the NSW government has had the report for six months and has not responded formally to their requests for further exploratory work.

"Until they get excavators out here and actually dig [the anomalies] up and find out exactly what they are, we are still going to keep wondering, and the government's just gonna keep putting things off," Uncle Roger said.

"They just have to do the right thing and get it all done. We just want a bit of peace and truth. I'm 76. So I haven't got that long left, and I want to see it before I die."

The report was handed to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) in March this year. Kinchela survivors and local Dunghutti families and traditional owners were briefed on its contents at the time. But the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Training Home survivors say there has been no further progress.

In June, the KBHAC board wrote to the NSW government to notify it of their unanimous preference for urgent excavation and other archaeological work to begin.

In the letter, seen by Guardian Australia, the KBHAC board said it wanted all high-priority areas to be excavated and relevant approvals be provided by the Heritage Council of NSW to undertake the work.

Guardian Australia understands there was a subsequent meeting with AANSW representatives on 28 June.

The letter also requested that AANSW coordinate a presentation to the KBHAC board at its 20 July meeting so that Kinchela survivors (who call themselves the Uncles) could discuss the "sensitive matter" with Heritage Council of NSW and the archaeological consultants.

"The Uncles identified that their prior and informed consent is essential in this very sensitive matter and know that this is something you and AANSW would understand, respect and support," the letter says.

This meeting did not occur, and there had been no further progress on the matter, Uncle Widdy said.

Uncle Lester was removed from his family at the age of three and taken to Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls, where many of the very young boys were taken, before he was sent to Kinchela when he was six years old.

He said the report confirmed what survivors of the home had long been saying.

"We're not looking for sympathy. We're just telling the truth … The surveys that have been done, that just proves what we were saying was true," he said from his Brisbane home.

A spokesperson for the NSW minister for Aboriginal affairs and treaty, David Harris, said he had requested an "update" on the matter from his department.

"The minister has been advised that the issues raised by Kinchela Boys' Home survivors and their representatives relate to highly sensitive and serious sorry business [the grieving and mourning process] on which Aboriginal Affairs NSW is working in consultation with the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation and the Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council."

| FTSE 100 | All share | Dow Indl | Nikkei 225 | £/€ | £/$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +15.58 | +4.90 | +55.72 | -249.94 | 1.1655 | 1.2477 |
| 7441.72 | 4053.60 | 34498.91 | 32991.08 | -0.0009 | -0.0013 |

# Business

## Mail owner explores Middle Eastern help for Telegraph bid

Mark Sweney

The owner of the Daily Mail has tapped Middle Eastern investors about potentially backing his bid for the Telegraph, the second prospective suitor known to have turned to the oil-rich region for support in a forthcoming auction of the leading Conservative newspaper.

Lord Rothermere - the owner of the Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT), whose brands also include MailOnline, Metro, the i and New Scientist - confirmed it had held talks but not reached a formal agreement with any investor from the region.

The auction of the Telegraph and Spectator titles, which is being led by Goldman Sachs on behalf of Lloyds Banking Group, is expected to formally start in the coming weeks.

Rothermere, who took DMGT private in 2021, had previously considered trying to buy the Telegraph as part of a consortium, though the structure of any takeover deal would be likely to trigger plurality and competition investigations by regulators.

Sean Walsh, a spokesperson for DMGT, said: "Over the past few years we have been approached and have had talks with a number of Middle Eastern investors who have shown an interest in participating in a bid for the Daily Telegraph. To date, we do not have a formal relationship with any investors."

Walsh added that if DMGT was to pursue a bid with an investor from the region - the Financial Times reported yesterday that talks have been held with Qatari backers - it would do so only if it had full control over the future of the Telegraph titles.

"We would only do so if we have the majority of economic and equity risk, and the control needed to invest in the business and protect its editorial independence," he said.

Last week it emerged that the Barclay family had held talks with backers from the United Arab Emirates in their attempt to regain control of the Telegraph newspaper group. The family has made a number of offers to buy back the newspapers after having been forced to surrender the debt-laden business to Lloyds, offering to rebuy the £1bn debt they owe the bank for £600m.

Lloyds has also held talks about the future of Very, the financial and retail group controlled by the Barclays.

Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay paid a sizeable £665m to knock out rivals and secure ownership of the Telegraph titles in 2004. However, a fall in print sales and a squeeze on advertising revenues for newspapers in general has reduced the value of the group. The titles have a book value of £140m in the latest financial results filed by the Barclays.

However the prestige of owning such trophy titles and the rarity of a sale of a major British media asset, particularly one with such strong links and influence with the Conservative government, is likely to result in a premium priced bidding battle.

**Air rage**
Climate activists threw a cream pie at Ryanair's CEO, Michael O'Leary, as he took a petition against strikes by air traffic controllers to the office of the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, in Brussels.

PHOTOGRAPH: OLIVIER HOSLET/EPA

## Triple lock could add £45bn to pensions bill by 2050, says IFS

Phillip Inman

Maintaining the triple lock on state pensions could add as much as £45bn to the bill by 2050, putting "insurmountable pressure" on the government to increase the minimum retirement age for future generations, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

In a report published before the release next week of official data for earnings growth, which will be used to set the annual increase in pensions, the IFS estimates spending on retirees could be boosted by £2bn more from April 2024.

Rishi Sunak is expected to support the increase after pledging last month to maintain the triple lock, which guarantees that the state pension rises each April by whichever is highest: pay growth, inflation or 2.5%.

In analysis of the last 12 years, the IFS said that if the state had linked pension rises to earnings alone, it would have spent £11bn less. It also said the uncertainty ahead meant the extra cost could be £5bn or £45bn, depending on earnings and inflation over the next two decades.

Labour has indicated it will back the pension boost, with a plan to maintain it for five more years.

In a blow to younger workers, the IFS said: "Retaining the triple lock for too long increases state pension spending so significantly that it leads to insurmountable pressure for a much higher state pension age.

"This would particularly affect people with poorer health who struggle to remain in employment."

Last month, Paul Johnson, the IFS director, said pensioners had benefited last year when prices were rising faster than incomes, and this year now earnings were rising faster than prices. "That is what the triple lock is intended to achieve," he said.

## Work in office at least three days a week, says Lloyd's of London boss

Julia Kollewe

Workers should come into the office at least three days a week - and not just Tuesday to Thursday - to ensure clients are properly served throughout the week, according to the head of the world's biggest insurance market.

Bruce Carnegie-Brown, the chairman of Lloyd's of London, said he wanted to see people working in its building in the City for most of the week, and to avoid a situation where Mondays and Fridays were not properly covered for clients.

"We've got to make sure that we still work across the working week and that we don't impede our ability to serve customers by the bookends of the week, defaulting to being a long weekend for everybody every week," he said. At the moment, workers come in two and a half days a week, on average.

The Lloyd's underwriting room is being refurbished to make it more appealing, with better technology and more modern desks, and will reopen on 18 September. Carnegie-Brown wants representatives from all 85 insurers that are members of the market to be present throughout the week on the main, ground floor.

"What we're trying to do now is to make sure that everybody who is an underwriter at Lloyd's has at least one box on the ground floor … it should make the ground floor much busier and buzzier as a result. That busyness will encourage a positive cycle of broker and underwriter interaction in the room. That's the intention, anyway."

Lloyd's said rising global fears over high interest rates, recession and the climate crisis were prompting more people and businesses to take out insurance policies.

Concerns, including over geopolitical tensions, have led to booming demand despite rising prices, Carnegie-Brown said. The insurance market normally tends to grow at the same rate as global GDP but is currently growing three times faster, with strong demand for natural catastrophe and cyber-risk cover.

"What we've identified is a huge range of risks out there that seem to be greater than at the moment than the average," he said. "I see quite a lot of natural catastrophe protection being bought, particularly wind storms, but increasingly around things like wildfires, and renewable energy is increasingly a big part of our business as more and more infrastructure for renewable energy is being built and therefore being insured."

# Green machines

## Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port goes all-electric

Jasper Jolly

In its nearly 60 years of making cars, Ellesmere Port's Vauxhall factory has nearly closed several times, says the Unite union convener John Cooper, standing beside the body of an electric van on the production line. Last-minute negotiations saved the plant each time, but it was a close-run thing.

Things have changed now: yesterday the site began production as the UK's first factory dedicated purely to producing electric vehicles at scale. It is a landmark moment in the shift away from fossil fuels for the British automotive industry.

The plant, by the River Mersey in Cheshire, will assemble 50,000 electric vans a year under the group's Vauxhall, Opel, Peugeot, Citroën and Fiat badges, with passenger cars to come next year.

Inside the 1960s shed, newly installed robots trundle around following lines on the floor. They carry 50kWh batteries - enough to go 175 miles - around the plant. The batteries are assembled onsite (using cells from China) before they reach the "marriage" stage of life: being lifted up to be bolted to the bottom of the vans.

Shifting to electric vans before a 2035 ban on new petrol and diesel sales will be a key part of cutting the UK's carbon emissions to net zero. Emissions from vans have been increasing, in part because of the boom in online retail orders.

"It is vital for the UK to switch to using electric vans to do our bit on climate change and clean up our choking cities," said Ben Nelmes, the chief executive of the New AutoMotive thinktank.

Diane Miller, the factory's director, said: "We're in the advantage. We don't have to worry any more about whether we'll change away from the internal combustion engine. We're there."

Vauxhall's owner, Stellantis, decided in 2021 to invest £100m in the future of the plant, which had produced 4.1m cars since 1985. It has invested another £30m to upgrade the press shop, which makes body panels, and install new electricity generation.

▼ *A Vauxhall Combo electric van is driven off the production line at Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: STELLANTIS/GETTY IMAGES

**50,000**
*Number of electric vans expected to be produced annually at the plant. Car production is due to start in 2024*

David Bailey, a professor of business economics at the University of Birmingham, said yesterday's move was "a major boost for UK auto". However, Bailey added that post-Brexit tariff rules represented "a large caveat to this good news story".

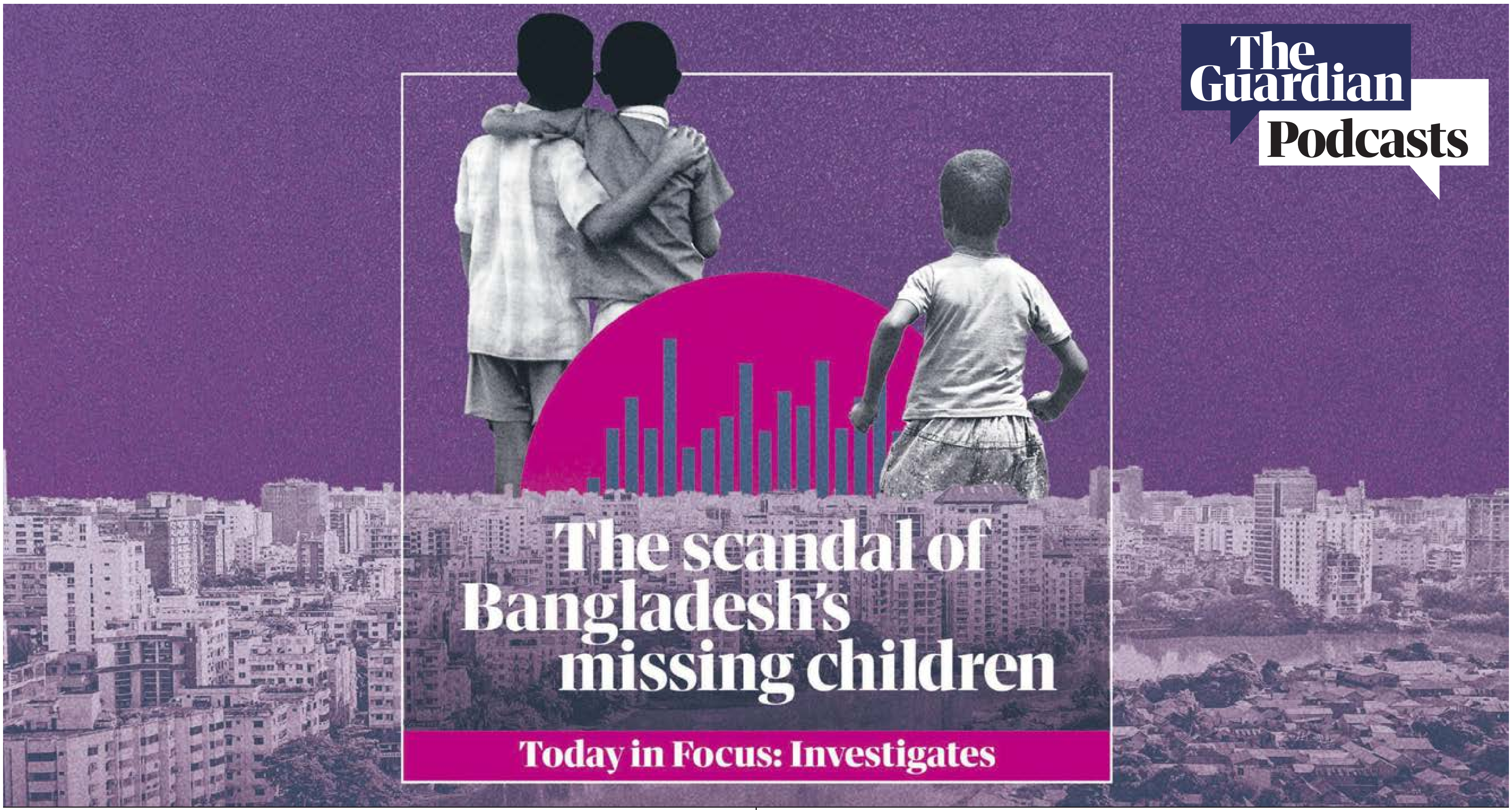
New rules at the end of the year will mean that electric cars imported into the EU - the UK's largest export market - will face tariffs unless they have enough UK or EU components.

However, that is impossible if relying on cells from China until planned European "gigafactories" catch up.

James Taylor, the managing director for the Vauxhall brand, argued that electric vehicles were already cheaper than internal combustion engine (ICE) cars on total cost of ownership, but he indicated that tariffs would be a blow. Stellantis, which also produces larger Vauxhall vans in Luton, wants the tariff plan to be delayed until 2027, and has warned that plants could be at risk otherwise. "Anything that adds costs into that equation isn't in anyone's favour, because we all want to get to a cleaner, greener, electric future as soon as we can," said Taylor. "Anything that tips that balance in favour of ICE and away from electric isn't something that would be welcome."

All large automotive manufacturers in the UK and EU are under pressure from regulators to increase the number of electric cars they sell to try to cut carbon emissions. Stellantis's electric van production will give it a significant advantage in meeting the new targets, according to Nelmes.

The New AutoMotive CEO added that when Britain's zero emissions mandate comes into force in January, "it will provide a shot in the arm for Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port-made electric vans".




What would you do if you thought your parents had abandoned you - only to discover they'd spent their whole lives searching for you? Guardian journalists Thaslima Begum and Rosie Swash share their two-year investigation into an international adoption scandal.

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**Business**
**Investment**

▼ *Staff from Cornish Lithium. The company is hoping to supply the renewable energy sector*
PHOTOGRAPH: JONNY WEEKS/THE GUARDIAN

# 'We're in exactly the right space'

# Cornish lithium mine marks new phase for state investment

**Kalyeena Makortoff**
*Banking correspondent*

It is not every day that the former boss of HSBC is found trudging through the mud of a Cornish mining site. But this was a special occasion.

On an overcast day in early August, John Flint, now head of the UK's Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), descended on Trelavour Downs in wellingtons and a high-vis jacket, alongside the Treasury minister Andrew Griffith, to mark the government-owned bank's £24m investment in Cornish Lithium: the company hoping to jump-start a local lithium supply chain for electric vehicles and the wider renewable energy sector.

The project fulfils the UKIB's mandate, by supporting regional development and the UK's net zero climate ambitions. But it also marks the lender's first direct equity investment and has increased the bank's total spending to £1.9bn.

However, that is far short of the £22bn worth of taxpayer funds currently at its disposal.

UKIB was unveiled in November 2020 by the then-chancellor, Rishi Sunak, alongside a £100bn infrastructure plan meant to help revive the UK's fortunes after the Covid crisis. The bank, based in Leeds, would issue loans, guarantees and direct equity investments in five priority areas - clean energy, transport, digital, water and waste - with an annual steer from its owner: the Treasury.

Planning had started months earlier, after the UK formally lost access to the European Infrastructure Bank (EIB), which had spent about £5bn a year in the UK before Brexit. UKIB was also expected to fill the shoes of the Green Investment Bank, which was privatised in 2017.

Labour was quick to criticise the plan, noting that UKIB was much smaller than rival development banks, including the KfW in Germany, which in 2022 had equity stakes worth €36.6bn (£31.4bn). Labour also noted that the Office for Budget Responsibility did not expect UKIB's work to increase economic growth.

But the Treasury pressed ahead, launching the bank in June 2021 in an unfinished state. According to a National Audit Office assessment, the government in effect skipped the detailed planning phase, starting operations with a skeleton crew of six staff, without the objectives or performance metrics that would usually be in place.

In September 2021, they hired Flint. He was well-versed in both sprawling bureaucracies and private sector finance after 30 years at HSBC, but City investors were not envious of his task.

▶ *UKIB's head, John Flint, far right, with the Treasury minister Andrew Griffith, far left, on their site visit to Cornish Lithium*
PHOTOGRAPH: UKIB

"John Flint readily refers to 'building the aeroplane in flight', and that's exactly what they were doing," said Darryl Murphy, Aviva Investors' head of infrastructure, highlighting the political pressure Flint was under.

Flint started hiring bankers, analysts and strategists to identify projects that could secure returns of at least 2.5% for the taxpayer.

His team took their time, controversially spending the bulk of two years issuing loans and investing in equity funds, rather than backing individual projects. That attracted criticism from MPs on the public accounts committee. "It's really not clear what the UKIB is doing that the market wasn't already or would be with better functioning tax incentives," its chair, Meg Hillier, said in January.

But Flint said UKIB staff were careful not to rush into direct investments. "We didn't have the skills and the team to do it … and until we got them, I couldn't allow us to do it."

Furthermore, the bank needed to avoid projects that could readily attract private funds without UKIB's help. "The government is borrowing from the markets to give to us to lend. So if we're doing things that are not needed, we're inflating the national debt."

Despite moving cautiously, UKIB's first investment - a £107m loan to the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to develop the South Bank Quay - has caused controversy, given that the local authority, led by Conservative mayor Ben Houchen, is now under investigation for corruption.

**£24m**
*The amount UKIB has invested in Cornish Lithium, the first time it has directly given funding to a project*

***'If we are doing things that are not needed then we're inflating the national debt'***

**John Flint**
*Head of UKIB*

UKIB said it was content with the project's progress following a recent site visit, and that "any inquiry into the wider Teesworks site is a matter for TVCA and not something we would comment on".

Most of UKIB's investments over the following year focused on energy infrastructure funds and fibre broadband projects. But as the skeleton team grew to 220 staff, including bankers with City credentials from Lloyds, Barclays, Aviva, and the EIB, costs unsurprisingly ballooned.

While the Treasury spent £12m on admin costs for UKIB's first year of operations, that tripled to £36m in the 2022-23 financial year. Aviva's Murphy said it was "astounding, in terms of scale. I don't think their cost-to-income ratio today would stack up in the private sector."

Those costs cover pay, including for Flint, who has a salary of about £490,000. Meanwhile, all of UKIB's staff are eligible for bonuses worth up to three months' salary. Flint defended this, saying he needed to attract experienced candidates, including from City firms. "In the context of the public sector, [the pay] is good. In the context of the private sector, it isn't," Flint said. "If we could reduce our salary bill by 10%, that saves the public sector some money, but if we deploy £22bn really badly, that's a whole [other] order of magnitude of taxpayer impact."

The Treasury is publicly confident about UKIB's progress to date, particularly in light of the recent Cornish Lithium investment.

But how successful UKIB will be at drawing in private investors remains to be seen.

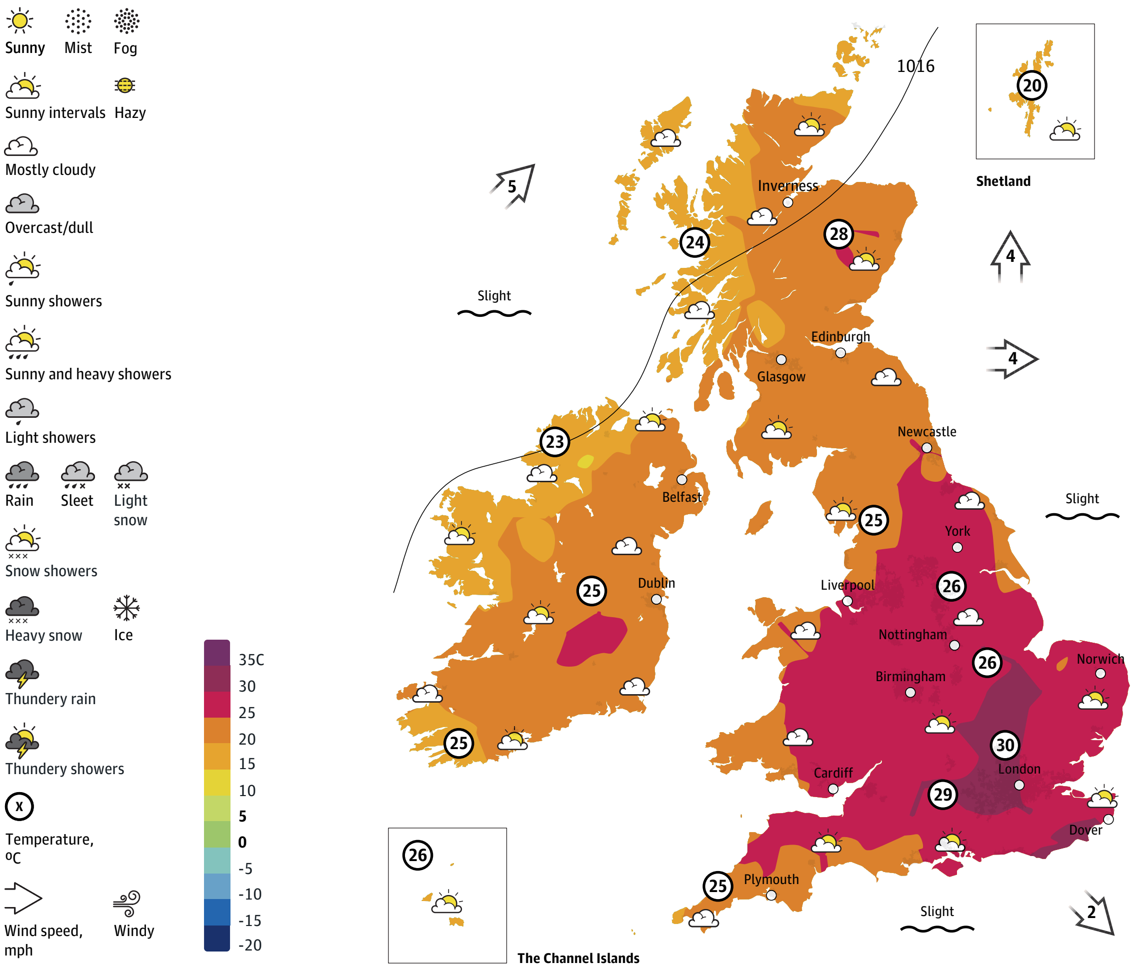
Darius Craton, head of the private capital advisory arm at the US investment bank Raymond James, said a consistent and steady stream of investments over the coming years would help. "Returns will still be at the forefront of investors' minds as they assess potentially partnering with the UKIB," he added.

But there could be a potential shake-up after the next election, with uncertainty over how Labour could deploy UKIB's resources.

For now, Flint is comfortable with UKIB's trajectory. "I don't have the luxury in this role of an organisation with lots and lots of resources. We've had to build it," Flint said. "So anyone who thinks we're not going quickly enough, should give me a call. But otherwise, I can assure you we're in exactly the right space."

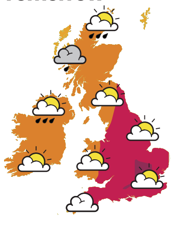
# Weather
## *Friday 8 September 2023*

## UK and Ireland Noon today

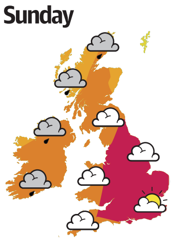



## Forecast

Low 16 High 27
**Tomorrow**



Low 18 High 27
**Sunday**



## Carbon count

Daily atmospheric $CO_2$ readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

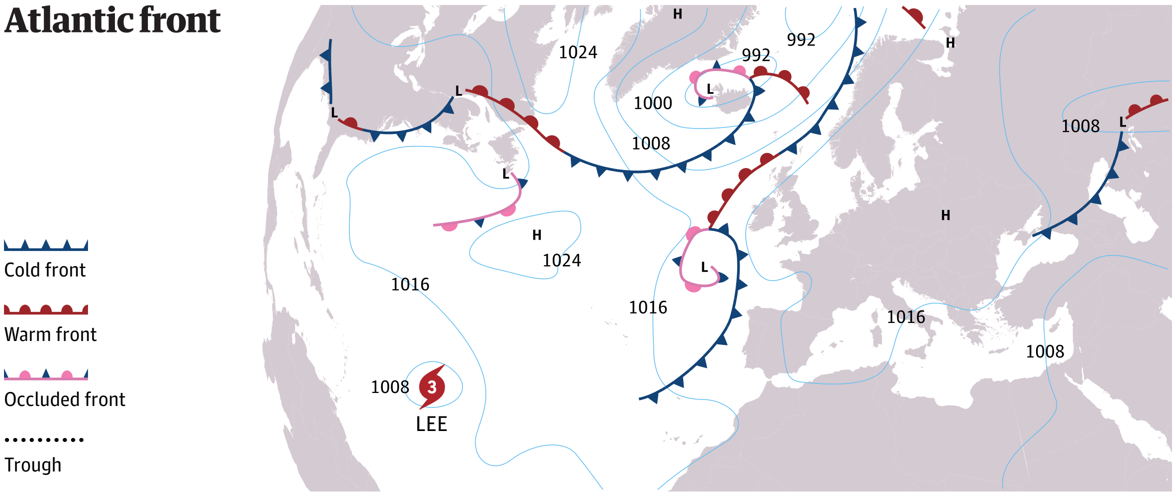
| | |
|---|---|
| *Latest* | |
| **05 Sep 2023** | 418.84 |
| *Weekly average* | |
| **27 Aug 2023** | 419.27 |
| **07 Sep 2022** | 416.42 |
| **07 Sep 2013** | 394.45 |
| *Pre-industrial base* | *280* |
| *Safe level* | *350* |

Source: NOAA-ESRL

## Around the UK

| | Lows and highs | Precipitation | Air pollution |
|---|---|---|---|
| **London** | 18 – 30 | 5% | Low |
| **Manchester** | 16 – 27 | 5% | Low |
| **Edinburgh** | 15 – 26 | 5% | Low |
| **Belfast** | 17 – 27 | 15% | Moderate |
| **Birmingham** | 16 – 28 | 10% | Moderate |
| **Brighton** | 17 – 25 | 0% | Moderate |
| **Bristol** | 18 – 25 | 10% | Moderate |
| **Cardiff** | 18 – 25 | 10% | Moderate |
| **Newcastle** | 15 – 25 | 0% | Low |
| **Penzance** | 17 – 23 | 20% | Moderate |

## Atlantic front




## High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aberdeen** | **0844** | 3.4m | **2121** | 3.3m |
| **Avonmouth** | **0109** | 9.9m | **1332** | 9.5m |
| **Barrow** | **0624** | 7.1m | **1858** | 6.8m |
| **Belfast** | **0601** | 2.9m | **1835** | 3.0m |
| **Cobh** | **--** | -- | **1220** | 3.1m |
| **Cromer** | **0113** | 4.0m | **1405** | 3.9m |
| **Dover** | **0554** | 5.3m | **1823** | 5.3m |
| **Dublin** | **0657** | 3.3m | **1931** | 3.3m |
| **Galway** | **--** | -- | **1217** | 3.8m |
| **Greenock** | **0645** | 2.8m | **1901** | 2.9m |
| **Harwich** | **0614** | 3.2m | **1847** | 3.3m |
| **Holyhead** | **0526** | 4.4m | **1810** | 4.3m |
| **Hull** | **0031** | 5.8m | **1320** | 5.8m |
| **Leith** | **0955** | 4.4m | **2226** | 4.3m |
| **Liverpool** | **0554** | 7.2m | **1835** | 7.1m |
| **London Bridge** | **0822** | 5.7m | **2055** | 5.9m |
| **Lossiemouth** | **0650** | 3.2m | **1924** | 3.1m |
| **Milford Haven** | **0037** | 5.2m | **1312** | 5.1m |
| **Newquay** | **--** | -- | **1210** | 5.2m |
| **North Shields** | **1046** | 4.0m | **2324** | 3.9m |
| **Oban** | **0002** | 2.7m | **1246** | 2.7m |
| **Penzance** | **--** | -- | **1146** | 4.2m |
| **Plymouth** | **--** | -- | **1205** | 4.3m |
| **Portsmouth** | **0632** | 3.8m | **1856** | 3.8m |
| **Southport** | **0500** | 6.9m | **1736** | 6.8m |
| **Stornoway** | **0232** | 3.5m | **1520** | 3.6m |
| **Weymouth** | **0003** | 0.4m | **1224** | 0.4m |
| **Whitby** | **1115** | 4.4m | **2353** | 4.3m |
| **Wick** | **0624** | 2.7m | **1857** | 2.7m |
| **Workington** | **0623** | 6.3m | **1902** | 6.2m |

## Sun & Moon

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sun rises** | 0623 |
| **Sun sets** | 1931 |
| **Moon rises** | 2342 |
| **Moon sets** | 1704 |
| **New Moon** | 15 Sept |

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

## Lighting up

| | |
|---|---|
| **Belfast** | 2000 to 0646 |
| **Birm'ham** | 1939 to 0631 |
| **Brighton** | 1931 to 0626 |
| **Bristol** | 1942 to 0636 |
| **Carlisle** | 1947 to 0632 |
| **Cork** | 2006 to 0658 |
| **Dublin** | 1959 to 0648 |
| **Glasgow** | 1955 to 0637 |
| **Harlech** | 1949 to 0640 |
| **Inverness** | 1956 to 0633 |
| **London** | 1931 to 0625 |
| **M'chester** | 1943 to 0632 |
| **Newcastle** | 1942 to 0627 |
| **Norwich** | 1928 to 0618 |
| **Penzance** | 1952 to 0648 |

## Pollutionwatch

Tiny particles from the wear of vehicle brakes, tyres and roads already make up about half of the air pollution from traffic. This will be getting worse because cars are getting heavier.

Over the past decade the average European car weight has increased by about 9%. Sales of small SUVs have increased fivefold and large SUVs sales are up sevenfold.

Dr William Hicks from Imperial College London has created a computer simulator to study air pollution from brakes. In his latest study, six different vehicles travelled on simulated drives around London and on an international standard vehicle test.

The brakes in the large SUV had to work twice as hard as those in the compact car, increasing the particle pollution that they produced.

Hybrid and battery vehicles have regenerative braking and use their electric motors to slow down. They only use their friction brakes during hard and slow-speed braking.

Despite their additional weight, the brakes in the battery and hybrid vehicles worked less hard than their petrol and diesel equivalents. Brake pollution was reduced by 88% in the international driving test and 68% in the London test.

**Gary Fuller** *@DrGaryFuller*

## Around the world

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Algiers | 28 | Lisbon | 25 |
| Ams'dam | 29 | Madrid | 31 |
| Athens | 28 | Malaga | 27 |
| Auckland | 17 | Melb'rne | 11 |
| B Aires | 17 | Mexico C | 25 |
| Bangkok | 32 | Miami | 33 |
| Barcelona | 26 | Milan | 30 |
| Basra | 47 | Mombasa | 30 |
| Beijing | 28 | Moscow | 13 |
| Berlin | 29 | Mumbai | 28 |
| Bermuda | 28 | N Orleans | 35 |
| Brussels | 31 | Nairobi | 22 |
| Budapest | 29 | New Delhi | 33 |
| C'hagen | 24 | New York | 30 |
| Cairo | 40 | Oslo | 22 |
| Cape Town | 18 | Paris | 34 |
| Chicago | 21 | Perth | 23 |
| Corfu | 31 | Prague | 27 |
| Dakar | 30 | Reykjavik | 10 |
| Dhaka | 29 | Rio de J | 27 |
| Dublin | 25 | Rome | 30 |
| Florence | 33 | Shanghai | 31 |
| Gibraltar | 25 | Singapore | 30 |
| H Kong | 28 | Stockh'm | 21 |
| Harare | 29 | Strasb'g | 31 |
| Helsinki | 21 | Sydney | 22 |
| Istanbul | 30 | Tel Aviv | 35 |
| Jo'burg | 27 | Tenerife | 28 |
| K Lumpur | 30 | Tokyo | 27 |
| K'mandu | 28 | Toronto | 22 |
| Kabul | 32 | Vancouv'r | 18 |
| Kingston | 33 | Vienna | 28 |
| Kolkata | 31 | Warsaw | 26 |
| L Angeles | 33 | Wash'ton | 34 |
| Lagos | 28 | Well'ton | 17 |
| Lima | 22 | Zurich | 30 |

**Football**
**Scotland have not reached Euros yet, insists Clarke**
*Page 37 →*

**Tennis**
**Osaka plans on playing 'way more' upon her return**
*Page 36 →*

# Sport

◀ *Howard Webb is discussing the big decisions from the Premier League on new TV show Match Officials Mic'd Up*
SHUTTERSTOCK

## Official business

# It will always be eVARngelists v VARsonists but TV tell-all is positive step

**Max Rushden**

This is fun isn't it? Howard Webb coming on television to tell Michael Owen, three days later, that Manchester City's Manuel Akanji was in Bernd Leno's eyeline as Nathan Aké's header squeezed past him and into Fulham's net at the weekend. I'm all in favour - I want more. David Elleray doing a follow-up show with Tony Adams. Then Pierluigi Collina can do a live Insta reviewing Elleray's review before Roger Milford and George Courtney lighten the mood with a synchronised TikTok dance with Keith Hackett beatboxing on the side. It's all rounded off with a live countdown of Mike Dean's top 40 PGMOL friends on VH1 voiced by Bruno Brookes. "Up two to No 11 and leapfrogging Darren Cann - it's David Coote." Eventually it'll become more popular than the football.

The despair of the Fulham manager, Marco Silva, was pretty evident after the Aké goal. "Everyone that has played football, who has some knowledge of football, knows 100% sure to disallow that goal. For the [assistant referee] it can be difficult to see an offside position, but for VAR it is impossible not to disallow that goal. That moment had a huge impact on the game."

I'm not entirely sure whether you need to have played football, or even seen one football match, to work out that Akanji was in the way. Anyone who has stood in front of a 6ft 1in man at any time in their life and then been asked: "Can you see that 6ft 1in man?" would have been able to give some guidance.

"From the outset, I want to say this should have been disallowed," said Webb on the TV show Match Officials: Mic'd Up on Sky Sports, aired on Tuesday. "These are not always easy to call because you are trying to get two pieces of information together. Is the player in an offside position, which official is in a good position to see, and what consequence was there of the player being in that position and how it impacts the opponents? Unfortunately it was not identified on the day and the learning from this will be shared from all of our group because we are looking to do better each and every week - and this was an error."

How can we share this learning? Perhaps after the eye test (there must be an eye test right?) prospective refs are led to a police lineup Usual Suspects style - with only Akanji standing there - whereupon each prospective ref is put to the test. "This is Manuel Akanji, can you see Manuel Akanji?"

Does Silva have a point? "You've never played the game" is the tiring preserve of the ageing ex-pro railing against caller after caller, journalist after journalist, or just anyone who disagrees with them. But perhaps with referees there is a kernel of truth.

To reach the top as an official you have to start young - which generally means making the choice to ref instead of play. This would appear to be a very strange choice to any kid who loves football. Most refs are people who really have never played the game. That probably doesn't matter all that often. And how would you possibly go about fixing it?

Clearly the suggestion to add an ex-player to the VAR room is ridiculous. Many of them don't know the laws. If you add that constant incorrect criticism to the continual law changes, the disaster of handball, and beleaguered managers deflecting from their own team's performance, you can see the odds are stacked against officials. Erik ten Hag trying to outwit a straight line was quite the highlight last week.

And Webb's move to go on TV is actually a really positive step and presumably the first one on the way to broadcasting the VAR room. I can understand the PGMOL's reluctance to go live - there are decisions that are difficult and subjective, and broadcasting three people, two of whom are breathless, saying" "I dunno Jeff *gasp*, what do you think?" "I dunno either, Brian" isn't likely to help in the short term. But perhaps over time fans, pundits and columnists would actually gain a modicum of sympathy for officials. Anyone who has stood in the centre circle of an amateur game because the ref didn't show will tell you how difficult it is.

*Perhaps over time fans, pundits and columnists would actually gain a modicum of sympathy for officials*

There will always be the VARsonists who want to burn it down, and the eVARngelists (sorry), who correctly point out that there are fewer incorrect decisions now. And there are the rest of us in the middle who were fine with how it was before and remain fine with how it is now. Football isn't meant to be perfect. Owners, managers, players, officials, journalists, fans all get things wrong. Another layer of people occasionally doing the same is OK with me. Sometimes the wait at the ground is terrible, sometimes it's great - a double celebration, or agony turned to joy.

And there are many who just hate talking about it and will see this as a waste of a column which could be discussing inverted full-backs, Jordan Henderson *not* going for the money or Kai Havertz's best position. If that's the case, more than happy to drive to your house to apologise. I can car share with Webb if you live in Brighton.

As for never playing the game - I'm sure Michael Oliver and everyone else at Stockley Park might like to yell to Silva and the rest of us: "You've never refereed a game." And the truth is we would all be appalling, even if most of us would be able to see Akanji from three yards away.

**Cricket** *First one-day international*

# Stokes has 'good plan' to cope with ODI return

**Tanya Aldred**

Ben Stokes returns to the England ODI fold hopeful that his post-World Cup plans will solve the long-running saga of his left knee - leaving him free to continue his career as his country's marquee all-rounder.

Stokes, who will play purely as a batter in the four-match series against New Zealand, starting today, and the World Cup, refused to be drawn on what this would involve. "There will be a time I make clear what's going on, but I don't think now is the right time," he said, while speaking confidently of "a really good plan".

Stokes had previously hinted that he would look at the six months between the end of the Ashes and the first Test against India in late January as a period to sort out longstanding knee problems. But after reversing his decision to retire from ODI cricket, and committing to the World Cup, that window has shrunk - but not, it seems, too far.

"There's actually quite a long time off after the World Cup," said Stokes. "I've been having some good conversations with some specialists, rehab and physios, the surgeons, the guys who know what they are doing.

"The medical team have been brilliant, getting different opinions. It's nice knowing after the World Cup we've got something, a really good plan we can do and we can stick to. I want to be playing next summer as a genuine all-rounder. This winter is all about playing this World Cup, then getting this knee sorted."

He admitted to occasional doubts about whether it was worth the pain of trying to bowl again: "You go through different thoughts. At the end of the Ashes when I had had another difficult series with the ball, my knee was sore, and I thought I can't be arsed with this any more, it is just too hard. But then you pull yourself away from that and keep pushing on. I get bored in the field when I'm not a bowler."

Stokes stepped down from ODI cricket in July 2022, shortly after taking over the captaincy of the Test team, blaming the "unsustainable" cricketing merry-go-round, but reversed that decision in August of this year, unable to resist the lure of the World Cup.

It was not, he revealed, a snap decision, but one made during ongoing conversations with the white-ball captain, Jos Buttler, and the coach, Matthew Mott.

"I needed to see how I got through the Ashes and then think about what I had after the World Cup, with the Test tour and all those things coming up. When I felt like I had to make a decision, and made myself available, it was an easy one to make.

"The words 'World Cup' are something that's pretty inspiring. Going into this one as world champions, playing a part in that in 2019, that was an unbelievable moment for us as a team and myself. The idea of going in and potentially being able to win back-to-back World Cups was one of the big things. When it came to it, it was nice to know that Jos wanted to pick me even though I probably wouldn't bowl a ball."

Stokes' selection nudged Harry Brook out of the World Cup squad and the series against New Zealand, but Brook has been added as cover against the Black Caps after Jonny Bairstow picked up a shoulder niggle and with Dawid Malan's wife due to give birth. With Mott hinting that the World Cup selection was not set in stone, the series looks to be a dogfight for batting places - with Brook's possible rivals Liam Livingstone, Jason Roy and Malan in the spotlight.

*Ben Stokes will play purely as a batter against New Zealand*

New Zealand, England's opponents in the breathtaking 2019 World Cup final, bring back Trent Boult for his first international since November, after he turned down a central contract last year. With Mark Wood also weighing up the lure of a central contract v franchise competition, Stokes was empathic: "We know the whole landscape of cricket is changing. That is great for the individuals who are still within the game but also the guys who are coming through … I've got to understand as a captain that there might be some decisions players make and I'm very comfortable and aware that something like that might happen."

**Venue** Sophia Gardens, 12.30pm
**England** *(possible)* JJ Roy, JM Bairstow, JE Root, BA Stokes, JC Buttler (capt/wkt), LS Livingstone, MM Ali, CR Woakes, SM Curran, AU Rashid, MA Wood.
**New Zealand** *(possible)* WA Young, DP Conway, DJ Mitchell, GD Phillips, TWM Latham (capt/wkt), HM Nicholls, MJ Santner, MJ Henry, TG Southee, LH Ferguson, TA Boult.
**Umpires** PR Reiffel (Aus) and AG Wharf (Eng).
**TV** Sky Sports Cricket **Radio** BBC 5 Live Sports Extra

**Tennis** *US Open*

# Medvedev and Shelton out to spoil hopes for dream final

**Tumaini Carayol**
*Flushing Meadows*

▲ *Ben Shelton is in a first grand slam semi-final, and faces Novak Djokovic*

As the ATP tour neared the halfway point of its 2023 season, the year had been largely defined by what had not occurred. It had been clear for a long time, as they tore through the opposition, that Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz were the best players in the world. Yet the two best players had also, somehow, not faced each other in more than a year.

Things can change so quickly in tennis. In a few short months, this rivalry has come to define the entire men's season. The important question before the US Open men's singles semi-finals tonight is whether either of the remaining challengers can stop Djokovic and Alcaraz from meeting again.

The dominance shared by Djokovic and Alcaraz this year is actually reflected in the third-ranked player. Daniil Medvedev has performed extremely well in his own right, ridding himself of his tough form early in the year with an incredible run in the spring. He has now reached consecutive grand slam semi-finals and in the live rankings, Medvedev (6,800) is closer in points to Alcaraz (8,535) than he is to the No 4 player, Holger Rune (4,710).

Yet, tonight against Alcaraz, he will be the massive underdog. He is very aware of it. After rating his play throughout the tournament so far as 10/10, Medvedev was asked what level it would take to beat Alcaraz. His response? 11/10.

"I would say what makes him that difficult is just that he has every shot. He has extra power to other players," said Medvedev. "So it's true many players probably I would [beat] with 97%, it's tough for them to hit the ball through me, like I'm always there, always running, always trying to get it back. He can do it just because he has this power; we see 100-mile forehand winner and stuff like this. Some players, even if we try, we cannot do it."

While Alcaraz is a better player, Medvedev also has a clear match-up issue. The two times they met this year, Alcaraz dismantled the Russian without dropping a set.

In those matches, Alcaraz showed that he has everything he could possibly want to break down Medvedev's style. Medvedev's keenness to stand so far back while returning serve is just an invitation for Alcaraz to exploit the massive space and angles he opens up by serve and volleying, moving to the net, and with his trademark drop shots.

For Medvedev, an 11/10 performance will mean, surely, one of the best of his life. "I need to serve on the line if I need to," he said. " I need to put my shots on the line. I need to be there 100% of the time and be better."

And then there is Ben Shelton. In contrast to the more successful and established Medvedev, the unseeded American is a far more uncertain factor. Tuesday's four-set win over Frances Tiafoe was an incredible occasion, two black male players battling in the deep end of a grand slam, bringing tennis to new audiences. With his charisma and entertaining shotmaking, it is obvious that Shelton will be extremely popular if his progress continues.

Once they got down to business, Shelton largely played a brilliant match, serving his lefty bombs, producing some bold, destructive shotmaking and pairing it with variety and his athleticism.

But the middle of the match underlined Shelton's inexperience, which a seasoned player such as Tiafoe should have taken advantage of. For all of his big weapons, the 20-year-old is still learning how to play with the point-by-point intensity required at the top level, without making any rash decisions or losing focus.

Tonight, Shelton will face a player who interrogates and exploits his opponents' inconsistencies and weaknesses like no other in history. Any drop in intensity, poor service games in a set or inopportune double faults will be punished.

The benefit of being young, though, is fearlessness. Unlike the generations before him, Shelton is not yet damaged by the crushing, inevitable experience of being dusted aside by Djokovic time and time again. He will have the benefit of returning to Arthur Ashe Stadium with the hope of swinging freely and seeing where his game matches up to the very best.

**Women's semi-finals**
Go online to read reports from both overnight matches
*theguardian.com/sport*

# Osaka planning to return for Australian Open

Naomi Osaka is intending to play "way more tournaments" on her return to tennis following the birth of her daughter. The four-time grand slam champion, who has not played a competitive match since last September, announced her pregnancy in January and gave birth to baby Shai in July.

Osaka, who has two US Open and two Australian Open titles to her name, had played an increasingly sparse schedule before her maternity leave, stepping away from the court several times to prioritise her mental health.

But time away has reinvigorated her love for the sport and, speaking to ESPN, Osaka said of her plans for next season: "It's definitely way more tournaments than I used to play. So I think some people will be happy with that."

The 25-year-old, who confirmed she is planning to play at the Australian Open in January, added of her reasoning: "I think it's because I realised that I don't know how the beginning of the year is going to go for me. I don't know the level of play and I think I have to ease into it. So, at the very least, I'll set myself up for a very good end of the year."

Osaka was at Flushing Meadows on Wednesday to take part in a forum on mental health and sport alongside the former swimmer Michael Phelps. She discussed her year away from tennis, saying: "It's definitely been really interesting. The whole process, it felt long and short at the same time.

"It really raised my love for the sport. It made me realise I'm not going to play for ever. I have to embrace the times. I've been playing tennis since I was three. I don't think I can predict what I'll do. I never am able to do that, but it definitely made me appreciate a lot of things that I took for granted." **PA Media**

## Sport In brief

**Cycling**

### Van Aert storms into Tour of Britain lead

Wout Van Aert produced a blistering finish over the final kilometre to win stage five of the Tour of Britain in Felixstowe. The 28-year-old Belgian had led out his Jumbo-Visma teammate Olav Kooij to a record-equalling four straight wins in the previous stages. But in a premeditated team move, the 2021 winner, Van Aert, caught the peloton cold by bursting clear to finish three seconds ahead of the field, with Great Britain's Ethan Vernon second and Bora-Hansgrohe's Danny van Poppel in third. Van Aert also moved top of the general classification. **PA Media**

**Cycling**

### Molano denies Groves stage win in Zaragoza

Juan Sebastián Molano sprinted to victory in the final 300m of the 151km stage 12 in the Vuelta a España to deny Kaden Groves a third stage win in Zaragoza. Groves' Alpecin-Deceuninck team had him well placed as they approached the line but they got boxed in against the barriers. Colombian Molano, of UAE Team Emirates, said: "Thanks to my team. They were amazing today. Everything went like we had planned in the meeting." American Sepp Kuss, of Jumbo-Visma, maintained his lead in the general classification. **PA Media**

▲ Steve Clarke warned his side not to get 'too carried away' in qualifying

# Clarke warns against any complacency for Cyprus tie

**Ewan Murray**
*Larnaca*

No sooner had the Cyprus manager Temuri Ketsbaia declared Scotland have already qualified for next summer's European Championship than Steve Clarke comprehensively dismissed the notion. "Football can bite you on the bum," said the Scotland manager.

Victory for Clarke's men over Cyprus tonight would make it five wins from as many matches in Group A. In that circumstance, Scotland could seal a finals berth as early as Tuesday if other results go their way. Ketsbaia insisted the Scots are already bound for Germany. "I believe they have already qualified," said the former Newcastle United midfielder. "I am not surprised they are at the top of the group. I am sure they will finish first or second."

Clarke raised an eyebrow when informed of his opposite number's belief. "That's not the mindset we want to have," he said. "We want to treat every opponent correctly and want to get as many points on the table as we can. This is another opportunity for us to add to our total so far. So I don't agree with that.

"If you do as well as we have done, to be above Spain at this moment in time, is obviously nice but there are still four games to go. So let's see how the group pans out before we all get too carried away."

Scotland's fans – 5,000 are expected in Larnaca – may harbour aspirations of topping this section when it finishes but Clarke maintained his theme. "We want to qualify," he added. "First and foremost we want to qualify. After we qualify, if we qualify, then we can quantify what we want to do next."

Scotland have been boosted by Billy Gilmour's appearances in Brighton's first four Premier League games and the inevitability that Kieran Tierney will return to regular club football now he is on loan at Real Sociedad. The downside relates to Scott McTominay, who looks out of the picture at Manchester United. "I've had one or two conversations with Scott already about how the season might pan out for him," Clarke explained. "Similar to Kieran last year, it's important when they are at a club and not playing regularly that they train very hard and, when they do get the minutes, do everything they can to be successful."

# Wales huff and puff but fail to spark against stubborn South Korea

**Wales 0**

**South Korea 0**

**Ben Fisher**
*Cardiff City Stadium*

At least there was no stoppage time. It was a friendly game the Wales manager, Rob Page, confessed he did not really want and so perhaps it was inevitable his team would play out a forgettable stalemate in their first meeting with South Korea.

The preface to the match was Wales's sorry record of late – it is now one win in 13 matches – and if that does not improve in Latvia on Monday, when they resume their ailing Euro 2024 qualifying campaign, the glare will only intensify on Page.

The attendance of 13,668 is the lowest home crowd for four years. By the end those Wales supporters who did bother resorted to making their own entertainment, singing the substitute David Brooks's name on loop for the final 15 minutes. If anything encapsulated the occasion it was the sight of Son Heung-min leaning on his Tottenham clubmate and opponent for the night Joe Rodon to shake off a bout of cramp in the closing stages.

Uefa regulations stipulate that nations in odd-numbered qualifying groups must fulfil blank dates in the calendar when group rivals are playing and so here was the non-event seemingly nobody wanted. "I said I didn't want to play it and I got criticised but that's the truth," Page said afterwards. "From a selfish point of view, I stick by that. We didn't want any injuries. We've got a load of positives out of it and we take that momentum on to Monday's game."

The substitute Kieffer Moore, who is suspended for Latvia, hit a post with a header midway through the second half and Harry Wilson saw an effort saved early in the first after a slick interchange involving Ethan Ampadu and Nathan Broadhead, on his first start. Son hit the target from 25 yards but was chaperoned throughout by a posse of Wales defenders. "No matter where Sonny plays, he is always followed by two or three defenders," said the South Korea manager, Jürgen Klinsmann. "Even if he goes to the sideline they will not leave him alone."

*Ethan Ampadu battles with Son Heung-min*

The Red Wall was noticeably depleted but there were stray horns courtesy of some home supporters. Ian Rush and Neville Southall were among those to deem it a worthwhile outing, the latter armed with a handheld fan to cope with the heat.

It was hardly fever pitch but not everything was friendly. Page asked questions of the Scottish officials after Kim Min-jae barged Brennan Johnson without even trying to pretend he was making a play for the ball. These were Johnson's first minutes since a £47.5m deadline-day move to Tottenham and he was replaced by Moore at the interval, part of a planned double substitution with Joe Morrell taking Ampadu's spot.

Wales's starting lineup in Riga is unlikely to be too different, save for Aaron Ramsey's inclusion from the off. Wales made a triple change on the hour after Hwang In-beom drilled a shot into a stanchion. Ramsey replaced Wilson while Wes Burns and Josh Sheehan arrived in place of Neco Williams and Jordan James, another to do himself justice on his first start.

**Wales**
**3-5-2**
Ward; Rodon, Mepham, B Davies; Roberts, James (Sheehan 60), Ampadu (Morrell ht), Wilson (Ramsey 60), N Williams (Burns 60); Broadhead (Brooks 73), Johnson (Moore ht)

**South Korea**
**4-4-2**
Kim S-g; Seol, Jung, Kim M-j, Lee K-j; Hong (Lee J-s 60), Lee D-g (Yang 84), Park (Lee S-m 84), Hwang I-b, (Hwang-c H 60); Cho (Hwang U-j 73), Son

**Referee** William Collum (Sco) **Attendance** 13,668

## Qualifying roundup

**Aurélien Tchouaméni and Marcus Thuram dealt another blow to the Republic of Ireland's Euro 2024 qualification hopes with a routine 2-0 win in Paris. The pair struck either side of half-time at the Parc des Princes as France maintained their perfect start to qualification with a fifth straight Group B victory. Ireland, on the other hand, have only three points from their first four games and Sunday's clash with the Netherlands in Dublin could all but decide their fate.**

**The Netherlands boosted their qualifying campaign with a 3-0 victory over Greece.**

**All three of the hosts' goals came in the first half in Eindhoven, with the midfielder Marten de Roon opening the scoring in the 17th minute. Denzel Dumfries then set up goals for Cody Gakpo and Wout Weghorst to ease pressure on their manager, Ronald Koeman.**

**Northern Ireland's slim hopes of qualifying from Group H took another blow as they were beaten 4-2 by Slovenia. Andraz Sporar fired the hosts in front after only three minutes in Ljubljana and while the teenage midfielder Isaac Price quickly struck back for the visitors, goals from Petar Stojanovic and the RB Leipzig striker Benjamin Sesko put Slovenia in charge at the break.**

**Michael O'Neill's side pulled one back early in the second half when Jonny Evans scored with a deflected shot, but Sporar added his second to secure the points. Finland top the group after winning in Kazakhstan. Niall McVeigh**

# Results

## Football

**INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES**

**Wales** (0) **0** **South Korea** (0) **0**

Austria 1 Moldova 1; Bulgaria 0 Iran 1; Norway 6 Jordan 0; Qatar 1 Kenya 2

**EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFYING**

**Group B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| France | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | +11 | 15 |
| Netherlands | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | +2 | 6 |
| Greece | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| Rep of Ireland | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -1 | 3 |
| Gibraltar | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 12 | -12 | 0 |

**France** (1) **2** **Republic of Ireland** (0) **0**
Tchouaméni 19
Thuram 48

**Netherlands** (3) **3** **Greece** (0) **0**
De Roon 17, Gakpo 31
Weghorst 39

**Group E**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Czech Republic | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 2 | +5 | 8 |
| Albania | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | +3 | 7 |
| Poland | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Moldova | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | -1 | 5 |
| Faroe Islands | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 9 | -7 | 1 |

**Czech Republic** (0) **1** **Albania** (0) **1**
Cerny 56 — Bajrami 66

**Poland** (0) **2** **Faroe Islands** (0) **0**
Lewandowski 73pen 83

**Group G**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hungary | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | +6 | 10 |
| Serbia | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | +3 | 7 |
| Montenegro | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | -1 | 5 |
| Bulgaria | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | -4 | 2 |
| Lithuania | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 | -4 | 2 |

**Lithuania** (0) **2** **Montenegro** (0) **2**
Paulauskas 71 — Krstovic 78
Cernych 90+4 — Savic 89

**Serbia** (1) **1** **Hungary** (2) **2**
Szalai 10og — Varga 34
Orban 36

**Group H**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Finland | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 3 | +8 | 12 |
| Denmark | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 5 | +6 | 10 |
| Slovenia | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 6 | +3 | 10 |
| Kazakhstan | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 5 | +3 | 9 |
| Northern Ireland | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 7 | -3 | 3 |
| San Marino | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 17 | -17 | 0 |

**Kazakhstan** (0) **0** **Finland** (0) **1**
Antman 78

**Denmark** (3) **4** **San Marino** (0) **0**
Højbjerg 26
Mæhle 28
Wind 40
Di Maio 90+3og

**Slovenia** (3) **4** **Northern Ireland** (1) **2**
Sporar 3 56 — Price 7
Stojanovic 17 — Evans 53
Sesko 42

**EUROPEAN UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFYING**

**Group A** San Marino 0 Norway 7
**Group B** Hungary 2 Kazakhstan 0
**Group D** Estonia 1 Bulgaria 1
**Group F** Northern Ireland 0 Luxembourg 1
**Group G** Belarus 2 Faroe Islands 3
**Group H** Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 Slovenia 2; Cyprus 1 Austria 1

## Cricket

**FIRST MEN'S ONE DAY INTERNATIONAL**

**Bloemfontein** South Africa 222 (T Bavuma 114). Australia 225 (Labuschagne 80). Australia beat South Africa by three wickets.

**ICC WOMEN'S TWENTY20 WORLD CUP QUALIFIER**

**Almeria** Scotland 99. Netherlands 134 (S Kalis 68). Netherlands beat Scotland by 35 runs.

## Golf

**IRISH OPEN** (Straffan)

**Leading first-round scores** (GB/Ire unless stated)
**65** S Sharma (Ind). **66** J Smith; T Bjorn (Den); M Schneider (Ger); R Fisher; K Krogh Johannessen (Nor). **67** Wu A (Chn); H Long (Ger); Z Lombard (Rsa); J Brun (Fra); J Luiten (Neth); M Lindberg (Swe). **68** G Wiebe (US); S Lowry; V Norrman (Swe); D Hillier (NZ); Y Paul (Ger); L Donald; M Power; M Pavon (Fr); S Söderberg (Swe); F Zanotti (Pry); N von Dellingshausen (Ger); A Hidalgo (Sp); Wang J (Kor); J Parry. **69** R McIlroy; B Horschel (US); T Clements; P Larrazábal (Sp); S Forsström (Swe); A Meronk (Pol); G Migliozzi (It); M Kieffer (Ger); D Brown; C Hill; A Fitzpatrick; C Syme; G Green (Mal); R Mansell; S Jamieson; H du Plessis (SA); J Scrivener (Aus); N Nørgaard Möller (Den); A Levy (Fr). **70** A Rai; J Campillo (Sp); S Crocker (US); E Ferguson; N Bachem (Ger); D Law; T Pulkkanen (Fin); W Besseling (Neth); S Tarrio (Sp); S Kjeldsen (Den); G Forrest; I Elvira (Sp); D Huizing (Neth); D van Driel (Neth); J Janewattananond (Tha); D Germishuys (SA); K Higa (Jpn); A Saddier (Fr); K Aphibarnrat (Tha).

**WOMEN'S QUEEN CITY CHAMPIONSHIP** (Cincinatti)

**Leading early first-round scores** (US unless stated)
**65** Liu R (Chn). **66** D Ardina (Phi); L Ström (Swe); E Szokol. **67** P Delacour (Fr); M Lee (Aus); EK Pedersen (Den); Ryu H-r (Kor); C Hull (Eng). **68** S Meadow (NI); P Yoktuan (Tha); M Uribe (Col); L Ko (NZ); M Fassi (Mex); Y Noh; M Metraux (Swi); Yin R. **69** Y Saso (Jpn); D Holmqvist (Swe); M Sagström (Swe); L Hartlage; M Jutanugarn (Tha); I Laklalech (Mor); L Stephenson; A Jutanugarn (Tha); B Tardy; G Then. **70** E Henseleit (Ger); R Rennell; N Kørstz Madsen (Den); P Lindberg (Swe); F Kinhult (Swe); J Boonchant (Tha); Shin J (Kor); Park S-h (Kor); J Song; L Coughlin; P Phatlum.

## Tennis

**US OPEN** (Flushing Meadows, New York)

**Men: Singles: Quarter-finals: C ALCARAZ** (Sp, 1) bt A ZVEREV (Ger, 12) 6-3 6-2 6-4.
**Doubles: Semi-finals: J SALISBURY & R RAM** (UK/US, 3) bt I DODIG & A KRAJICEK (Cro/US, 2) 7-5 3-6 6-3 **R BOPANNA & M EBDEN** (Ind/Aus,6) bt N Mahut & P Herbert (Fr) 7-6 (7-3) 6-2.

**Women: Singles: Quarter-finals: M KEYS** (US, 17) bt M VONDROUSOVA (Cz, 9) 6-1 6-4.
**Doubles: Quarter-finals: HSIEH S-W & WANG X** (Tai/Chn, 8) bt C GAUFF & J PEGULA (US/US, 3) 7-6 3-6 6-4; **L SIEGEMUND & V ZVONAREVA** (Ger/Rus, 12) bt V Azarenka & B Haddad Maia (Blr/Br) 5-7 7-5 6-4.

**Mixed: Doubles: Semi-finals: A Danilina & H Heliövaara** (Kaz/Fin) bt E Shibahara & M Pavic (Jpn/Cro) 7-6 6-4; **J PEGULA & A KRAJICEK** (US, 1) bt T Townsend & B Shelton (US) 6-7 (5-7) 6-1 10-3.

## Cycling

**VUELTA A ESPANA**

**Stage 12** (Olvega - Zaragona, 165.4km): **1** S Molano (Col) UAE Team Emirates 3hr 23min 35sec; **2** K Groves (Aus) Alpecin-Deceuninck; **3** B van Poppel (Neth) Intermarche-Circus-Wanty; **4** R Oliveira (Por) UAE Team Emirates; **5** E Theuns (Bel) Lidl-Trek all same time.
**Overall standings: 1** S Kuss (US) Jumbo-Visma 42hr 51min 20sec; **2** M Soler (Sp) UAE Team Emirates +0:26; **3** R Evenepoel (Bel) Soudal Quick-Step +1:09; **4** P Roglic (Svn) Jumbo-Visma +1:32; **5** L Martinez (Fr) Groupama-FDJ +2:02.

**TOUR OF BRITAIN**

**Stage five** (Felixstowe; 192.4km): **1** W Van Aert (Bel) Jumbo-Visma 4hr 20min 05sec; **2** E Vernon (GB) +0:03; **3** D van Poppel (Neth) Bora-Hansgrohe; **4** A Salby (Den) Bingoal WB; **5** M Kanter (Ger) Movistar all same time.
**Overall standings: 1** W Van Aert (Bel) Jumbo-Visma 17hr 45min 36sec; **2** E Vernon (GB) +0:03; **3** M Kanter (Ger) Movistar; **4** O Kooij (Ned) Jumbo-Visma; **5** D Bomboi (Bel) TdT-Unibet all same time.

**WOMEN'S SIMAC TOUR** (Netherlands)

**Stage 2** (Leuven; 7.1km ITT) **1** L Kopecky (Bel) SD Worx 9min 00sec; **2** R Markus (Neth) Jumbo-Visma +0:02; **3** Z Backstedt (GB) Canyon/SRAM Racing +0:11; **4** A Henderson (GB) Jumbo-Visma same time; **5** C Schweinberger (Aut) Fenix-Deceuninck +0:13.
**Overall standings: 1** L Kopecky (Bel) SD Worx 3hr 40min 53sec; **2** R Markus (Neth) Jumbo-Visma +0:02; **3** L Wiebes (Neth) SD Worx +0:13; **4** A Henderson (GB) Jumbo-Visma +0:14; **5** Z Backstedt (GB) Canyon/SRAM +0:15.

# Greg Wood's racing tips

**Haydock 1.30** Feud **2.00** Lady Pagasa **2.35** Level Up (nap) **3.10** Dazzling Jewel **3.45** Street Kid **4.20** Red Maids **4.55** Double Oban

**Ascot 1.50** Cajetan **2.25** Olympic Candle **3.00** Seaward **3.35** Ideal Guest **4.10** Out Of Shadows **4.45** Man Of Eden (nb) **5.20** Gulmarg

**Newcastle 2.10** International Law **2.45** Don't Look Back **3.20** Sun Power **3.55** Abruzzo Mia **4.30** Dark Encounter **5.05** Trefor **5.40** Thunder Princess **6.10** Rumnotred

**Kempton 5.55** Due Consideration **6.30** Fire Demon **7.00** Lambert **7.30** Beccara Rose **8.00** Mighty Gurkha **8.30** Medieval Gold **9.00** Liberated Lad

# Fixtures

**Football** (7.45pm unless stated)
**European Championship qualifying**
**Group A** Cyprus v Scotland; Georgia v Spain (5pm)
**Group D** Croatia v Latvia; Turkey v Armenia
**Group J** Bosnia-Herzegovina v Liechtenstein; Luxembourg v Iceland; Slovakia v Portugal
**European Under-21 Championship qualifying**
**Group One** Latvia v Italy (3pm); Republic of Ireland v Turkey (7.30pm)
**Group Two** Malta v Spain
**Group Three** Netherlands v Moldova (5.30pm); Sweden v North Macedonia (5pm)
**Group Four** Poland v Kosovo (7pm)
**Group Five** Armenia v Albania (4pm)
**Group Seven** Portugal v Andorra (5.30pm)
**SPFL Trust Trophy**
**Third round** Hibernian U21 v The New Saints (6pm)

**Rugby union**
**World Cup**
**Pool A** France v New Zealand (8.15pm)
**Premiership Cup**
**Pool stage** Cornish Pirates v Bath (7.30pm); Doncaster v Cambridge (7.30pm)

**Rugby league**
**Betfred Super League**
Castleford v Hull (8pm); Huddersfield v Hull KR (7.45pm); St Helens v Leigh (8pm); Wakefield v Catalans Dragons (7.30pm)
**Betfred Championship**
Newcastle v Featherstone (8pm); Sheffield v Keighley (7.30pm)

**Cricket**
**First one-day international**
England v New Zealand, Sophia Gardens (12.30pm)
**Second women's one-day international**
Pakistan v South Africa, Karachi (11.30am)

James Maddison trains with the England team at St George's Park
EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/GETTY

# Maddison aiming to ignite England career at long last

No 10 who grew up watching videos of Gascoigne is flying at Spurs and ready to show his worth in Southgate's side

**David Hytner**

It is not easy to explain, it may not bear forensic scrutiny but sometimes it just feels right, the possibilities so tantalising that they override everything. And so James Maddison signed for Tottenham in June; the showman midfielder, full of mischief and expression, at a club where a player of his ilk is practically a constitutional requirement.

"That kind of look on it was one of the factors in why I wanted to go," Maddison says as he prepares with England for tomorrow's Euro 2024 qualifier against Ukraine in Poland and next Tuesday's friendly with Scotland in Glasgow. "I could just see myself playing for Tottenham. I'm not even 100% sure what I mean by that so don't ask me! But I could just see myself in that team, in that kit, in that stadium. It just fitted well for me. And they've always had that type of player.

"My dad's favourite player when I was growing up was Gazza. That sort of midfielder who wants to be creative and entertain the fans and be a personality. Christian Eriksen in more recent years but since him they probably haven't had that type of player. I'm not putting myself on the same level but I'm in that category."

Maddison has made a spectacular start, two goals and two assists in four Premier League games, Spurs in second place with 10 points. He showed zero hesitation in taking over the No 10 shirt from Harry Kane after the England captain's move to Bayern Munich and it has been love at first sight in the eyes of the fans - as it was always going to be.

Maddison now hopes to ignite his England career against Ukraine and Scotland, having won only three caps so far, his confidence sky-high, although that is more of a state of mind than any passing boost.

Aged 26, Maddison is too young to remember Paul Gascoigne. But Maddison's father, Gary, a graphic designer, would put together video montages for fun in which the maestro featured heavily. Maddison would watch and re-watch them. Gary also has a YouTube channel - gazmaddy - to which he has uploaded videos of his son's footballing journey.

"Before you become a professional, you are a fan of the game and I loved players who had personality, who had a little bit of cheekiness about them," Maddison says. "Gazza was a perfect example.

"I remember a clip where the cameras are going down the national anthem and it gets to him and he sticks his tongue out and starts messing with the camera and going all bog-eyed. I just love that. That's why I like interacting with fans. I don't know if you saw the clip of me with the Bournemouth fans …"

Maddison is referring to the one from the Saturday before last when he goes to take a corner at the Vitality Stadium and is serenaded with: "Southgate's right, you're fucking shite." Maddison deliberately spots the ball outside the quadrant to wind them up before putting it back with a big grin.

"It's just little stuff like that which I enjoy doing, that keeps me hungry," Maddison says. "I like the theatre element of almost being the villain. That's how I enjoyed watching football and that's how I enjoy playing it. I'm not trying to be the showman, that's just how I am as a person. I go for a roast dinner with my family … I like to be the main man, you know."

Maddison talks about how he is perfectly aligned with the new Spurs manager, Ange Postecoglou, who wants him to play with freedom and bravery as a left-sided No 8, pressing hard, always looking forward. It has been music to his ears.

The established narrative in terms of his relationship with Gareth Southgate, who has used him off the left wing, is different. Maddison has heard it for years. He made his England debut in 2019 and was pretty much out in the cold until his inclusion in the 2022 World Cup squad when, frustratingly, he was unable to play because of a knee injury.

Southgate overlooked him for so long, people have told Maddison, because he did not like him. Perhaps, it was down in part to Maddison's extrovert nature, his love of a night out. But as with Southgate, Maddison continues to push back against the perceptions.

"Gareth gave me a massive compliment as we were leaving the World Cup," Maddison says. "He said he knew it had been tough with the injury and not featuring but he was really impressed with the way I had carried myself round the group. That stuck with me.

"Did Gareth ever have a problem with me? I didn't ever think that once, to be honest. There was a point when I wasn't playing well enough. And after that you've just got to work hard to get back in because Gareth is a very loyal man, he trusts his players and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Sometimes it is harder for people to break in than actually get out, if you know what I mean.

"Listen, it's important you have a social life as well. I am not going to sit in my room and go to bed at 8pm. I am a social guy. I like to go out. You need that stimulus in your life, a good balance. We are all professional athletes. If you don't look after yourself, you get found out pretty quickly."

> *'Did Gareth ever have a problem with me? I didn't ever think that once. He is a very loyal man'*

## Manchester United invited paedophile to women's game

**Paul MacInnes**

Manchester United invited a convicted paedophile to be a special guest at the biggest women's football match in the club's history, after failing to conduct the appropriate checks despite his position as a former coach at the club.

Geoff Konopka was the manager of Manchester United Ladies between 1983 and 2001, but was sentenced to four years in prison in 2011 and put on the sex offenders register for a decade after being convicted of offences of indecent assault and gross indecency against girls aged under 16.

However, he was invited by United to attend the women's fixture against Everton in March 2022, the first WSL match to be held at Old Trafford. He was also featured positively in a profile of United's history in the women's game on the club's website in July of last year and was namechecked in a feature in the matchday programme before United Women played Aston Villa in December.

United said that as a result of information they had "recently" obtained they would have "no further contact" with Konopka. "Manchester United has recently received information around these convictions, and as a matter of urgency has been in contact with the relevant legal and football authorities to substantiate the facts," the club said in a statement. "The club has taken appropriate action after receiving this information and will have no further connection with the individual. Manchester United expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the victims and all those affected by these abhorrent crimes."

According to reports first published in the Times, Konopka's apparent rehabilitation led to a number of former Manchester United Ladies players to complain to the club. In emails to United's safeguarding co-ordinator, they expressed their "shock" and "disgust" at seeing him "paraded hand-in-hand with Manchester United" in the promotional article. The club have now removed the content from their website.

## No to Saudi clubs in Europe - ECA

**Nick Ames**
*Berlin*

The European Club Association chairman, Nasser al-Khelaifi, has poured cold water on the notion that Saudi Arabian sides are on course to be granted spots in the revamped Champions League.

The rapid growth and formidable spending power of the Saudi Pro League have brought suggestions that a place for its champions will be sought in Europe's leading competition, which will expand next season to a new "Swiss system" of 36 clubs. Executives from its leading sides are reportedly keen to test the proposition but Khelaifi, who is also the president of Paris Saint-Germain, emphasised no such move is on the horizon. Khelaifi did, however, leave the door open for stand-alone showpieces to take place in the gulf state.

"It is very difficult," he said when asked about the prospect of Saudi clubs being admitted to the table. "We are trying to let more European clubs participate in European competition. I don't see there are other clubs coming from outside to Europe.

"If there is a Super Cup or something, why not? But to play in Europe in a competition, if you are not a European [club] … I do not see [it]."

Khelaifi backed the expanded Club World Cup, which will involve 12 European sides competing in a 32-club event from 2025, despite concerns about player welfare in a swollen calendar. "I am the first one to protect the players," he said. "But we want to play a competition that's worth playing in. The Club World Cup will be one of the biggest events in the world."

Khelaifi was speaking after the ECA's general assembly in Berlin, where Saudi clubs' financial clout and the lack of assurances about payment of transfer fees came up in discussion behind closed doors. He rejected any idea, though, that European clubs collectively feel an inherent threat from the Saudi wielding of power.

"If we are not happy why do we sell our players to them?" he said. "So far, I don't see any danger."

## Regulator aware of 'complex' problems

**Continued** *from back page*

be confirmed in the coming months. In its briefing paper, the government said: "Regarding the scope of the tests, we recognise the trade-offs involved, and are aware of the range of corporate structures behind clubs, including complex ownership structures, private equity and funds, sovereign wealth funds, and fan-owned clubs.

"We are designing the legal scope of the tests with these challenges in mind … but, as stated in the white paper, the regulator would not be able to make unilateral judgments that risk straying into foreign policy."

The government further confirmed the scope of the regulator's remit yesterday. Ensuring suitable owners is to be one of four key responsibilities, the other three being to ensure clubs have appropriate financial resources, protect fan interests and authorise approved competitions. The regulator will be fully independent of the game and have backstop powers to force financial settlements, with the Premier League and EFL still at odds over redistribution.

## The matches

**Pool A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Zealand | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| France | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Italy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Uruguay | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Namibia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Tonight** France v New Zealand, Paris (8.15pm)
**Tomorrow** Italy v Namibia, Saint-Étienne (noon)
**14 Sep** France v Uruguay, Lille (8pm)
**15 Sep** New Zealand v Namibia, Toulouse (8pm)
**20 Sep** Italy v Uruguay, Nice (4.45pm)
**21 Sep** France v Namibia, Marseille (8pm)
**27 Sep** Uruguay v Namibia, Lyon (4.45pm)
**29 Sep** New Zealand v Italy, Lyon (8pm)
**5 Oct** New Zealand v Uruguay, Lyon (8pm)
**6 Oct** France v Italy, Lyon (8pm)

**Pool B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South Africa | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ireland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scotland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tonga | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Romania | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Tomorrow** Ireland v Romania, Bordeaux (2.30pm) **Sunday** South Africa v Scotland, Marseille (4.45pm) **16 Sep** Ireland v Tonga, Nantes (8pm) **17 Sep** South Africa v Romania, Bordeaux (2pm) **23 Sep** South Africa v Ireland, Paris (8pm) **24 Sep** Scotland v Tonga, Nice (4.45pm) **30 Sep** Scotland v Romania, Lille (8pm) **1 Oct** South Africa v Tonga, Marseille (8pm) **7 Oct** Ireland v Scotland, Paris (8pm) **8 Oct** Tonga v Romania, Lille (4.45pm)

**Pool C**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Australia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fiji | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Georgia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Portugal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Tomorrow** Australia v Georgia, Paris (5pm)
**Sunday** Wales v Fiji, Bordeaux (8pm)
**16 Sep** Wales v Portugal, Nice (4.45pm)
**17 Sep** Australia v Fiji, Saint-Étienne (4.45pm)
**23 Sep** Georgia v Portugal, Toulouse (1pm)
**24 Sep** Wales v Australia, Lyon (8pm)
**30 Sep** Fiji v Georgia, Bordeaux (4.45pm)
**1 Oct** Australia v Portugal, Saint-Étienne (4.45pm) **7 Oct** Wales v Georgia, Nantes (2pm)
**8 Oct** Fiji v Portugal, Toulouse (8pm)

**Pool D**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| England | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Japan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Argentina | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Samoa | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chile | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Tomorrow** England v Argentina, Marseille (8pm) **Sunday** Japan v Chile, Toulouse (noon) **16 Sep** Samoa v Chile, Bordeaux (2pm) **17 Sep** England v Japan, Nice (8pm) **22 Sep** Argentina v Samoa, Saint-Étienne (4.45pm) **23 Sep** England v Chile, Lille (4.45pm) **28 Sep** Japan v Samoa, Toulouse (8pm) **30 Sep** Argentina v Chile, Nantes (2pm)
**7 Oct** England v Samoa, Lille (4.45pm)
**8 Oct** Japan v Argentina, Nantes (noon)

**Quarter finals**

**Sat 14 Oct** Winner Group C v Runner-up Group D, Marseille (4pm)
Winner Group B v Runner-up Group A, Paris (8pm)
**Sun 15 Oct** Winner Group D v Runner-up Group C, Marseille (4pm)
Winner Group A v Runner-up Group B, Paris (8pm)

**Semi finals**

**Fri 20 Oct** Winner QF1 v Winner QF2, Paris (8pm)
**Sat 21 Oct** Winner QF3 v Winner QF4, Paris (8pm)

**Third-place playoff**

**Fri 27 Oct** Loser SF1 v Loser SF2, Paris (8pm)

**Final**

**Sat 28 Oct** Winner SF1 v Winner SF2, Paris (8pm)

# Jones has gift of building his own reality then making us all believe it

Australia coach is a master of public bluff and bluster but it is all part of a plan to get players buying into his vision

**Jonathan Liew**
*Paris*

*Eddie Jones has come under huge pressure since taking charge of the Wallabies for a second time in January*

'That's not a bad question, mate. You must have spent a lot of time on that one. I'm impressed with that." When you are dealing with Eddie Jones, you learn fairly quickly that compliments and insults are basically made of the same substance. Everything here is masks and layers, shifting floors, the performance of a performance. The words themselves are largely meaningless: sometimes they are sincere and true, sometimes not, but you're never going to know for sure, so in a way it hardly matters. Trying to scan a Jones press conference for genuine insight is a little bit like applying a meteorological analysis to the lyrics of It's Raining Men.

And so you start questioning yourself. You even start questioning facts. You listen to Jones talking up the potential of his side, a pack that can "dominate the World Cup", the way a new young group of players can "fulfil their dreams" and inspire a new era of success in Australian rugby, and you think: hang on. In the universe I choose to live in, you guys have just lost your last five games in a row. What universe, exactly, do you inhabit?

But then this is the real gift of Jones, and even now nobody does it better. Often you see it described as "siege mentality", but in fact it is a little more complex. It is the ability to create whole new realities around his teams, to populate them with a mixture of old myths and new vibes, to tell his players: look, there's a picture in my head, and most people can't see it yet, but if you stick with me you'll get to see it too. Everyone else sees a callow, inexperienced team with a fragile midfield and errors waiting to happen. But I see the potential. I see what you can really be. Now, go and do a shuttle run.

This, perhaps, was the real intention of his extraordinary outburst a few weeks ago at Sydney Airport. Jones railed at the assembled reporters for their "negativity" and accused them of writing off Australia's World Cup chances: a principled stand only mildly tarnished by the green canvas hat he was wearing, which made him look less like an elite sporting operator and more like a soap star who had just been voted off *I'm A Celebrity*. It was the comms equivalent of pressing the reset button, establishing a clean break with the past. "A bit of fun," Jones later called it, but it served a vital narrative function. Fine, you guys keep crying over Michael Hooper. We're busy writing a new page.

**The 2027 World Cup will be in Australia and Jones realises that the hard yards need to be done now**

Now, ahead of Australia's opening game against Georgia, Jones has a new story to tell. And for all the obfuscation and distraction, this is the part of coaching that has always genuinely moved him: the process of turning raw base metal into precious silver, rendering the picture in his head into flesh. It was striking to hear player after player speaking about last month's brutal training camp in Darwin, where they grimaced their way through gruelling physical drills, tackles interspersed with press-ups, tug-of-war contests in 30C heat. "I feel like I'm in the best shape I've ever been in," said the back row Rob Valetini. "I don't think I've ever trained as hard as we have. Our connection's grown through that as well."

And even if results are yet to turn their way, there has been enough in their performances to hint at a direction of travel. They led the All Blacks 17-3 at half-time in Dunedin before imploding in the second half. Their new brand of front-foot rugby has been error-strewn at times but also sparkling in periods. The emphasis has been on training decision-making rather than drilling structures, encouraging players to react to the game in front of them rather than the diagrams they studied in the analysis room. "We can't play to a structure because the picture's always changing," scrum-half Tate McDermott said. "There's a lot of scenario-based, reaction-based stuff, and it was a big shift to what we were used to at our Super Rugby clubs."

In the meantime, Jones has been crafting the wider tale. One of his favourite sporting books of recent years is Owen Eastwood's *Belonging*, which argues that we are all motivated by a need to attach ourselves to a shared story, that we are all linked by a common thread to the past and future, and that we perform at our best when those values and beliefs are reinforced. It is why Jones speaks so often about reconnecting this team with an Australian public that has grown largely apathetic to rugby union in recent years. The next World Cup in 2027 will be in Australia, and Jones realises that the hard yards need to be done now.

"Rugby's not about enjoyment," Jones once said. "Enjoyment is sitting on Coogee Beach with an ice cream, watching the waves." And on some level we probably all know how this is going to end: in a maelstrom of needless feuds and unsettled scores, embittered ex-coaches and hasty pay-offs. But for now, eight months into his new project, Jones is the dream weaver, the conductor of the World Cup's youngest orchestra on the eve of its opening recital. And we're still hooked. Because for all the bluster, and against our better judgment, every so often Jones means exactly what he says.

## France

## New Zealand

*Today 8.15pm* **Group A**

| France | | New Zealand |
|---|---|---|
| **T Ramos** Toulouse | 15 | **B Barrett** Blues |
| **D Penaud** Bordeaux | 14 | **W Jordan** Crusaders |
| **G Fickou** Racing 92 | 13 | **R Ioane** Blues |
| **Y Moefana** Bordeaux | 12 | **A Lienert-Brown** Chiefs |
| **G Villière** Toulon | 11 | **M Telea** Blues |
| **M Jalibert** Bordeaux | 10 | **R Mo'unga** Crusaders |
| **A Dupont** Toulouse (c) | 9 | **A Smith** Highlanders |
| **R Wardi** La Rochelle | 1 | **E de Groot** Highlanders |
| **J Marchand** Toulouse | 2 | **C Taylor** Crusaders |
| **U Atonio** La Rochelle | 3 | **N Laulala** Blues |
| **C Woki** Racing 92 | 4 | **S Whitelock** Crusaders |
| **T Flament** Toulouse | 5 | **S Barrett** Crusaders |
| **F Cros** Toulouse | 6 | **D Papali'i** Blues |
| **C Ollivon** Toulon | 7 | **S Cane** Chiefs (c) |
| **G Alldritt** La Rochelle | 8 | **A Savea** Hurricanes |

| Replacements | Replacements |
|---|---|
| **P Mauvaka** Toulouse | **S Taukei'aho** Chiefs |
| **J-B Gros** Toulon | **O Tu'ungafasi** Blues |
| **D Aldegheri** Toulouse | **F Newell** Crusaders |
| **R Taofifénua** Lyon | **T Vaa'i** Chiefs |
| **P Boudehent** La Rochelle | **L Jacobson** Chiefs |
| **M Lucu** Bordeaux | **F Christie** Blues |
| **A Vincent** Montpellier | **D Havili** Crusaders |
| **M Jaminet** Toulouse | **L Fainga'anuku** C'ders |

**Venue** Stade de France, Paris
**Referee** Jaco Peyper (SA)

## Last two meetings

**France 40 N Zealand 25** Nov 2021
*Les Bleus* end a 14-game losing streak against the All Blacks with a four-try victory in Paris.
**N Zealand 49 France 14** Jun 2018
Rieko Ioane grabs a hat-trick as New Zealand complete a 3-0 series win in Dunedin.

## Key clash

**Antoine Dupont v Aaron Smith**
Smith, an 119-times capped veteran No 9, will have his work cut out keeping the face of France 2023 and the world's leading player quiet at Stade de France. Sit back and enjoy the show.

## Key numbers

**31**
Consecutive pool games that New Zealand have won at a World Cup. They've never lost one.

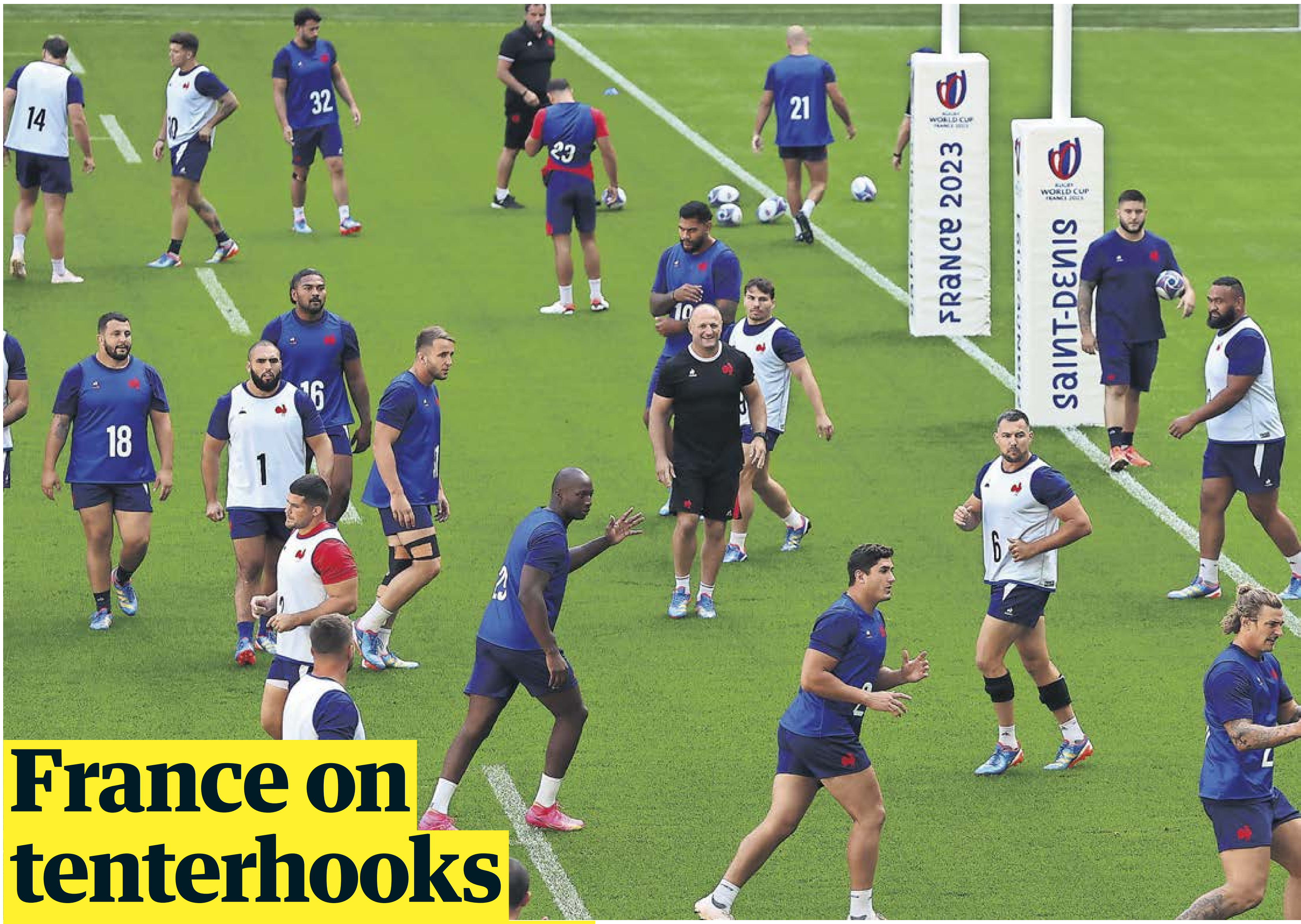
**4**
Matches in a row in which Damian Penaud has scored a try; he is France's leading tryscorer in 2023

## Weather

29°

## Follow the action

**TV** ITV1
**Radio** BBC 5 Live
**theguardian.com** Join Luke McLaughlin from 7pm for minute-by-minute coverage




# France on tenterhooks as tension hits boiling point

Hosts have been waiting years for this moment and will want to start in style against old foes New Zealand

**Robert Kitson**
*Paris*

It is baking hot in the City of Light, warm enough to make rugby union even harder than usual. The Stade de France can be a chilly, impersonal place but it felt like a giant concrete microwave as the local heroes eased through their final training session ahead of tonight's scene-setter against New Zealand, with temperatures of about 30C expected for the opening ceremony.

By the time the first ball of the 2023 Rugby World Cup is kicked it might be fractionally cooler, but it is already clear this tournament will demand serious fitness and mental stamina. Extending the competition to seven weeks, ironically on player welfare grounds, has also added another dimension. By the time everything fully reaches the boil back in the same massive cauldron on 28 October, one or two sides will have wilted around the edges.

It is worth remembering, too, that South Africa lost their opening fixture of the 2019 tournament to New Zealand and ended up winning the competition. Something to cling to there, perhaps, if it all goes *poire*-shaped under the Friday-night lights for a France team who firmly believe they have the ability to create history by securing the Webb Ellis Cup for the first time.

The other pertinent case study might be 2007, when France were beaten by an inspired Argentina on the opening night only to bounce back and upset New Zealand in the quarter-finals. There is a strong sense within this French squad, regardless, that they are ready for whatever lies ahead. Watching their consistently successful defence coach, Shaun Edwards, prowling the pristine grass, with a cap protecting his bare head and his collar turned up against the sun's glare, was a further tell-tale sign that little has been left to chance.

In some ways France have been awaiting this specific game and this potentially life-changing tournament for even longer than the four years and 39 games that their head coach, Fabien Galthié, has been in charge. It was their 62-13 World Cup obliteration by the All Blacks in 2015 that convinced all concerned that some sort of oval-shaped revolution was required. Their greatest triumph, at least up to this point, has been reconnecting the national team with its public, and streamlining the previously strained relationship between the clubs and the French Federation.

It has allowed Les Bleus, as the great Serge Blanco put it this week, to "dream with their eyes wide open" ahead of this weekend's grand départ. In the auditorium of the Stade de France yesterday, the team manager, Raphaël Ibañez, also made no effort to shy away from the scale of the occasion. "For this generation, for this group, history has yet to be written."

A spot of warm weather, in short, is not about to deter them. If it helps to have the world's best player, Antoine Dupont - set to win his 50th cap - on their side, France are a team with an array of contrasting threats. Even in the absence of the injured fly-half Romain Ntamack they can select the gifted Matthieu Jalibert, while Cameron Woki in the second row is another exceptional athlete and a potential nightmare for every opposing lineout.

Of course life would be simpler with the influential Jonathan Danty fit and well in the midfield but, by the sound of it, the big man will be back before too long. Cyril Baille's calf should also have healed by the tournament's latter stages while, in Gabin Villière and Damian Penaud, France have two of the sharpest wings in the world to complement the pedigree heavyweights elsewhere.

All that now remains is to kickstart the party at the All Blacks' expense. The New Zealand coach, Ian Foster, whisked out a pair of dark shades at the pre-game press conference in mock honour of Galthié - "Fabien looks good in his glasses too …" - but the slightly awkward joke could not disguise the fact his side badly need to rebound from their chastening Twickenham horror show against South Africa last month.

Foster, interestingly, is another keen student of opening game history, having been Steve Hansen's assistant when the beaten Springboks subsequently enjoyed the last laugh in 2019. "I'm often asked what we'd do differently about 2019 and I said: 'Just throw the first game,'" joked Foster. "We beat South Africa and they ended up having a different path to the final. You never know in tournaments."

It has also not gone unnoticed in the All Black camp that they have won only one of the seven previous World Cups held outside New Zealand. "That shows you the size of the task," said Foster. "You learn

***The national team's greatest triumph, up to this point, has been reconnecting with the public***

**Ready to make their mark**

*The France World Cup squad train before their showdown against the All Blacks* DAVID ROGERS/ GETTY IMAGES

over history that you don't just turn up and win, you've got to play well - and a lot of All Blacks teams haven't achieved that. We want to walk out with shiny eyes, ready to play. Once the ref blows his whistle, let's see what happens."

Regardless of how France react to the pre-match haka - "We're happy for the opposition to respond however they want to respond," said Foster - it seems certain to be some spectacle. This is Foster's third World Cup and even he admits he has "never seen a buildup like this."

Thomas Castaignède, the former international who was a board member at Toulouse for four years and is now on the Ligue Nationale de Rugby board, has also watched a lot of French teams over the years and thinks this one is appreciably different. "In the past we maybe thought we were outsiders. We weren't as confident of our potential. Previously we've had a sense of expectation going into big tournaments but this time we really believe in our team. We have lost the kind of fear we used to have."

No fear, brilliant players, a nation on tenterhooks? It is a potentially irresistible mix, particularly when blended with a real sense of purpose. "We don't want to disappoint our families and the French public," says Woki, born up the road from the Stade de France in Saint-Denis. Even if France do falter initially, they are a team built to withstand all eventualities.

# Cheika braces Pumas pack for attritional battle with England

Argentina head coach selects forward-heavy bench in anticipation of arm-wrestle

**Luke McLaughlin**

The Argentina head coach, Michael Cheika, is expecting an attritional Rugby World Cup encounter with England after naming his team for their Pool D opener tomorrow night.

The former Wallabies coach has named an experienced XV for the high-stakes match in Marseille against Steve Borthwick's side, selecting six forwards among eight replacements.

"It was difficult to choose the starting team, because they are all available," Cheika said yesterday. "Given the game we imagine it will be, we will have six forwards and two backs in the reserves."

Juan Cruz Mallía of Toulouse returns at full-back and provides cover at fly-half, helping to accommodate an extra forward on the bench. Cheika's selection indicates the kind of approach he anticipates from Borthwick's England, who have put an emphasis on set-piece solidity since he took charge last year.

"We have a lot of confidence in him and in his role," Cheika said of Mallía. "It's not easy to change positions. He has touched the ball many times more when he plays at fly-half, a position that requires more responsibility. [Nicolás] Sánchez is training well, with continuity in the game, but Mallía can be a fly-half."

The Pumas will be captained by the hooker, Julián Montoya of Leicester, who packs down in the front row with Thomas Gallo and Francisco Gómez Kodela, while the second-row pairing of Matías Alemanno and Tomás Lavanini start together for the first time since the 2015 World Cup.

Pablo Matera (No 6), Marcos Kremer (No 7) and Juan Martín González (No 8) make up a dynamic back row, with Gloucester's Santiago Carreras at fly-half alongside the No 9 Gonzalo Bertranou.

▲ *Leicester's Julián Montoya will captain Argentina against England*

Emiliano Boffelli, who kicked 25 points for the Pumas in their one-point win against England at Twickenham last November, starts on the right wing, with Mateo Carreras on the left, and the inside-centre Santiago Chocobares partnering Lucio Cinti in midfield.

"We expect a fervent public," Cheika said of what promises to be a highly-charged occasion in the south of France. "My family will be there, the family of many players also, and we know there will be many Argentinian fans.

"It is a nice experience because the Rugby World Cup happens every four years. For many [supporters] it is important; they spend their savings to be here, and we want them to enjoy it."

The temperature in Marseille is forecast to peak at 30C tomorrow dropping to around 23C for the evening kick-off scheduled for 8pm UK time.

"We prepared as we always do," added Cheika. "We are happy. Preparation is more important than the game because it is what we can control."

Meanwhile, the blindside flanker Matera - who captained Argentina to their first ever win against the All Blacks nearly three years ago - said he is "afraid" before the potentially decisive opening game, adding that the Pumas are determined to concentrate on themselves.

"I would be lying if I told you that I am not afraid or not anxious," Matera said. "The important thing is to keep the focus and transform it into energy.

"Our confidence is going to be in what we do. Today we have the focus placed on ourselves, on what we are doing and what we want to do. Whatever England are going to do, we are prepared to face it."

# Borthwick hands starts to May and Mitchell for Marseille test

**Continued** *from back page*

provided an example, close to home, of why supporters have not yet completely given up on his side.

Under Borthwick, England have lost six of their nine matches, including five of their last six, and Argentina are favourites for tomorrow's clash in Marseille, but the head coach said: "One of my boys [Hunter] wrote a letter to Anthony Watson, because of how much he felt, because Anthony had to be withdrawn from the squad. People in this country feel an attachment to this team, they feel a passion. I know on Saturday night these guys are going to bring all their passion.

"There is a feeling among the players that they've been written off too early. People have called time on them a bit too early. I think there is a lot of class in this squad. The players have a hell of a lot more to go. I sense the frustration about what people have been saying about them, and right now as I sit here and prepare, and coach this team this last week, I have an expectation that they will go and perform with the quality that they have this week. There is a huge number in this squad who are just like [Courtney], made of tough stuff."

The selection of Mitchell is a show of faith by Borthwick given the 26-year-old has made just one previous start - against Fiji - and has only six caps to date. Danny Care - who is on the bench - and Ben Youngs have a combined total of 214 by way of comparison but when Jack van Poortvliet was ruled out of the tournament with an ankle injury, Mitchell was called up and has seized his chance.

"Immense credit to Mitch in that he was incredibly disappointed not to make the original squad," added Borthwick. "One of the positives that came out of that Fiji game was his performance. He was a dangerous running threat, everyone knows he is a dangerous running threat."

May, meanwhile, was called in for Watson, who also had to withdraw from the squad through injury. He revealed earlier this week how he almost told Borthwick he was leaving the England camp upon learning he would not make the initial World Cup squad but is selected on the right wing with Elliot Daly - back after a knee injury - on the left. "Jonny's preparation on a daily basis is an example to everyone," said Borthwick. "He has been fantastic."

Dan Cole has also been named to start at tighthead prop with Borthwick picking Will Stuart on the bench having decided not to risk Kyle Sinckler, who has been hampered by a chest injury.

Curry, meanwhile, comes back into the side at openside flanker and is determined to make up for lost time, having missed the Six Nations with a hamstring injury. "I've been locked away in a gym for a few weeks, so naturally there's quite a bit [of energy]," said Curry.

"You just want to get out there and get going. It's hard because you can't write it down but it's a feeling. I think Saturday is going to be fun."

## England v Argentina

**Venue** Stade Vélodrome, tomorrow 8pm
**England** F Steward; J May, J Marchant, M Tuilagi, E Daly; G Ford, A Mitchell; E Genge, J George, D Cole, M Itoje, O Chessum, C Lawes (c), T Curry, B Earl.
**Replacements** T Dan, J Marler, W Stuart, G Martin, L Ludlam, D Care, M Smith, O Lawrence.
**Argentina** J Cruz Mallía; E Boffelli, L Cinti, S Chocobares, M Carreras; S Carreras, G Bertranou; T Gallo, J Montoya (c), F Gómez Kodela, M Alemanno, T Lavanini, P Matera, M Kremer, J Martín González.
**Replacements** A Creevy, J Sclavi, E Bello, G Petti, P Rubiolo, R Bruni, L Bazán, M Moroni.
**Referee** Mathieu Raynal (Fr).
**TV** ITV1. **Radio** BBC 5 Live.

## Rugby World Cup In brief

**Wales**

### Faletau returns from injury for Fiji opener

Taulupe Faletau will make his first Wales appearance since last season's Six Nations after recovering from injury to feature against Fiji. The No 8 with 100 caps missed Wales's entire World Cup warm-up schedule because of a calf muscle problem, but he goes straight into the starting lineup for Sunday's Pool C clash in Bordeaux. Jac Morgan, who will captain the side, and Aaron Wainwright join Faletau in the back row, but Morgan's co-captain, Dewi Lake, does not feature in the matchday 23. Lake suffered a knee injury during Wales's defeat to England at Twickenham last month. **PA Media**

**Ireland**

### Sexton will not make excuses in Bordeaux

Johnny Sexton insists there will be "no excuses" if he fails to perform in Ireland's opener against Romania as he prepares to make his first competitive appearance in almost six months. The 38-year-old will make his long-awaited comeback as a starter tomorrow afternoon in Bordeaux and has been targeting the fixture since being hit with his ban in mid-July. "I'm delighted to be back," said Sexton. "Hopefully I can go out and play well and have a good performance. I expect that of myself. There are no excuses in that regard." **PA Media**

**Italy**

### Self-belief is our biggest change, says Crowley

Italy's coach, Kieran Crowley, has said the biggest change in his team's outlook in the past 18 months has been self-belief. Crowley, who will leave his role after the World Cup, has brought the English-born lock Dino Lamb and prop Danilo Fischetti into his starting XV for tomorrow's Pool A match against Namibia in Saint-Étienne, the only changes from Italy's final warm-up win over Japan last month. "When you start winning games you get self-belief," said Crowley. "We wanted to get some respect and credibility and in the end that's why you play." **Reuters**

*Taulupe Faletau has not played for Wales since the Six Nations*

**Straight bat**
Stokes has plan to fix his injured knee and return as all-rounder
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**Show time**
Maddison on using his Spurs form to shine for Southgate
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**Max Rushden TV tell-all is positive step in ongoing VAR wars**
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The Guardian
*Friday*
*8 September 2023*

# Sport

**Rugby World Cup 2023**

## Paris poised to turn up the heat

**Opening match preview**
*Robert Kitson, page 40 →*

DAVID RAMOS/WORLD RUGBY VIA GETTY IMAGES

## World Cup rallying cry

# Lawes vows England will go out 'all guns blazing' in opener

**Gerard Meagher**
*Marseille*

England have vowed to come out "all guns blazing" against Argentina in tomorrow's crunch World Cup opener after claiming they have been written off too early amid a desperate buildup to the tournament.

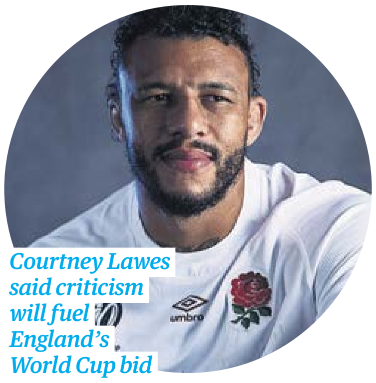
The head coach, Steve Borthwick, has handed a surprise start to the livewire scrum-half Alex Mitchell and struck a defiant tone yesterday following widespread criticism of England's performances since he took over in December. Tom Curry has also been chosen for his first England appearance under Borthwick, having recovered from an ankle injury, while Jonny May - like Mitchell - will start despite missing out on the initial 33-man World Cup squad.

England's farewell match before departing for France was a humiliating defeat by Fiji, rounding off a disappointing warm-up campaign in which they lost three of their four games. Defensively they were dreadful against Fiji while they have yet to click in an attacking sense but Mitchell's selection hints at a more dynamic approach and Courtney Lawes, who captains the side with Owen Farrell suspended, has sent a message to supporters who have been losing faith.

"It is going to be a hell of a spectacle, so enjoy it," said Lawes. "We are going out all guns blazing and we are going to give it everything we have got. There is a frustration. We feel it as much as anybody. We are in the thick of it and we are doing everything we can to make sure come this weekend we are firing on all cylinders.

"[The criticism is] a bit of fuel for the fire and gives us motivation. Obviously we want to perform for each other, mainly. As I said we've had a really good training week, things feel like they're starting to fall into place, so we've got some genuine excitement going into the weekend. We know we're facing a good team, but we know we've got as good a chance as any of coming away with a win."

Borthwick was in a similarly determined mood and 41 →



*Courtney Lawes said criticism will fuel England's World Cup bid*

# Big clubs want government to block state ownership

**Paul MacInnes**

Leading Premier League clubs have asked the government to block nation states from owning English football teams, with the request potentially forming part of a new regulator's brief.

The news comes as the government confirmed the arrival of an independent football regulator "when parliamentary time allows", following a consultation process with stakeholders in the English game. The Guardian understands some leading top-flight clubs used the consultation period to lobby the government on state ownership, a process separate to any Premier League submissions.

Assessing the suitability of prospective owners and directors will be one of the regulator's key roles. The government said its consultation process had revealed support for an "ethics and integrity" component within any owners' and directors' test (ODT) and that "some stakeholders suggest that the ODTs should limit state ownership".

The Premier League did not mention state ownership when it updated its own ODT this summer and an apparent split between the league and some of its clubs follows the takeover of Newcastle United by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF).

According to the Premier League it received guarantees that the state of Saudi Arabia would not have control over Newcastle United. Following the dispute between the PGA and PIF-owned LIV Golf in the US, however, legal briefings described PIF as "a sovereign instrumentality of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and Yasir al-Rumayyan, the chair of Newcastle and governor of PIF, as "a sitting minister of the Saudi government". This led several teams to believe the guarantees had been breached.

The final terms of the regulator's new ODT will 38 →

***'The regulator will not be able to risk straying into foreign policy'***

**Government paper**

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